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ABSTRACT

This special report is a look at illiteracy across Canada and in Saskatchewan. It includes stories by Peter Calamai, a national correspondent with Southam News, and by Regina Leader-Post reporters Kevin O'Connor, Zena Olijnyk, Ron Petrie, and Beverley Spencer. The publication also includes stories by the Canadian press. Calamai's stories are the result of almost a year of intensive research, based on a national literacy survey by Southam News. Topics discussed in the articles include the following: the survey, who are illiterates, the schools' role, the immigrant, literacy pays, learning behind bars, government gibberish, bluffing it, getting help, a short story, native needs, failed attempts, programs that work, read all about it, making the grade, and warring ideologies. A section on literacy instruction using the newspaper lists numerous teaching strategies for the regular classroom, English as a second language, and adult education. (KC)

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FOREWORD

Reading and writing have been the engines of human progress since the earliest stirrings of civilization on earth. Literate societies have acquired material, intellectual and cultural riches of which those not blessed with the ability to read or write could only dream.

Our democracy and the precious freedoms it provide are rooted in literacy and depend in large measure on the capacity of ordinary citizens to inform others through writing, and themselves through reading. One would therefore think that in a country like Canada the language arts would be jealously nurtured and passed enhanced to each new generation.

Now the Calamai Report and other current data reveal a shocking absence of proper stewardship of this national treasure.

This special report provides an up-to-date assessment of the state of literacy in our province and country. It is being made available by the Regina Leader-Post and Saskatoon Star-Phoenix to thousands of education administrators, school trustees, teachers, tutors and ordinary citizens of Saskatchewan who want or need to know more about the causes, cures and consequences of illiteracy.

It is not presented to place blame for our failure to make "literacy for all" a national priority. Rather, we hope the stories printed here will serve to increase awareness and spur action on a problem that touches all, and threatens this and future generations.

Jim Struthers

Jim Struthers
Executive Vice-President

LeaderPost

EDITOR'S NOTE

This special report is a look at illiteracy across Canada and in Saskatchewan. It comprises stories by Peter Calamai, an award-winning national correspondent with Southam News, and by Leader-Post reporters Kevin O'Connor, Zena Olijnyk, Ron Petrie and Beverley Spencer. The publication also includes stories by the Canadian Press.

Calamai's stories are the result of almost a year of intensive research, based on a $295,000 literacy survey by Southam News. The survey's findings were published in September in a copyrighted series for daily newspapers. They have spurred a number of positive initiatives in the fight against the problem.

Through schools and a variety of government and private agencies, there are efforts being made to battle illiteracy . . . but with limited success.

Illiteracy rates in Saskatchewan are highest among the rural population, immigrants and natives, but illiterates live inconspicuously in every community.

The inability to read and write is a closely guarded secret for many of these people. Several of the people interviewed by Leader-Post reporters asked that their real names not be used. However, their identities are known to the newspaper.

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PUBLISHED OCTOBER 1987 BY THE LEADER-POST

Any study concerning literacy must first struggle with a definition, since no generally accepted definition of literacy yet exists.

This publication is no exception. In fact, there are four different definitions of literacy used for statistics in the articles presented here. Two of them are used in the Southam literacy series, and two more by Leader-Post staff.

In the Southam series, there is a two-fold definition of "illiterate." The term refers to: a) adult Canadians who can barely read, called "basic illiterates," and b) to those whose reading, writing and numbers skills are not sufficient to get by in everyday life, called "functional illiterates." The minimum standard for functional illiteracy was determined with the aid of a jury panel in the Southam literacy survey.

Stories by Leader-Post reporters contain information based on Statistics Canada definitions of a "functional illiterate" as anyone with a formal education of Grade 9 or less, and a "basic illiterate" as a person with less than Grade 5 education. Thus, there may be differences in other statistical information, including job incomes and rates of illiteracy among specific groups.

Stereotypes outdated

You saw me today. I sat down beside you on the bus and borrowed the sports section. Or maybe it was at the corner store, when I picked up some milk on the way home from work.

I'm older than the rest of the guys around here, nearly 50, and didn't finish high school because my folks were hard up for money. We had a big family and Mom stayed home while Dad worked in construction.

Maybe someone read to me as a child, but I don't remember it now. There weren't many books in the house, anyhow, no typewriter or encyclopedia neither.

But Dad had the local paper delivered every day, just like I do now. We're not dummies in this family, you know.

I flip through the news and spend a lotta time on the horoscope and the sports. Can't stomach the funnies anymore, though. To figure out the comics today, you gotta care a lot more than I do about what's happening in government.

Let's check the listings and see what's on the tube tonight.

No ... I don't watch THAT much. Two hours ... well, probably closer to three ... every night.

It's a lot more enjoyable than reading.

OTTAWA — That's a typical adult illiterate talking. Not a real individual, but a composite picture from 300 hours of personal interviews with more than 500 functional illiterates in the Southam Literacy Survey.

It's not the usual portrait painted by community literacy groups and public agencies. They draw their image either from unrepresentative literacy students — amounting to fewer than two per cent of all illiterates — or from census statistics about people with less than Grade 9 schooling, the government's official definition of illiterate.

Instead, the Southam survey identified a true cross-section of real Canadians who can't read and write well enough to do many everyday tasks. And there were surprises:

- More men than women were identified as functional illiterates — a ratio of 53.5 to 46.5 per cent for a projected national difference of 300,000 between the sexes;
- More than half the 4.5 million illiterates said they went to high school and one-third claimed to have finished Grade 12;
- Eighty-six per cent of illiterates in the labor force had a full-time or part-time job over the past 12 months;
- Two-thirds of illiterates live in Ontario and Quebec, although the chances of being an illiterate are highest in Newfoundland;
- Only one in five illiterates blamed poor reading or writing skills for holding them back in life;
- As expected, illiterates are older — 30 per cent over 65 years old compared to 16 per cent of the general population. Otherwise they're just as likely as literate Canadians to be married or have children. And, despite feminist arguments, single parents don't jump out as more at risk.

Overall, illiterates emerge as operating in the mainstream of society but are not really part of it.

Independent of the Southam survey, literacy expert and author Richard Darville has concluded that many illiterates lead "satisfying and effective lives.

"The stereotype of the illiterate down-and-outers just doesn't hold," Darville declares in Vancouver. "They are good workers, loving parents, helpful friends and neighbors."

But most literacy advocates, relying on official education statistics and literacy students, paint a far gloomier picture of the typical illiterate as unemployed, shut off from society and lurching from crisis to crisis.

"We almost have to prostitute ourselves in order to get funding. We have to talk about these 'poor people who can't get along at all.' But they're not skilless because they lack that one skill," international literacy consultant Carman St. John Hunter admonished a Toronto literacy conference this spring.

However, the lives of functional illiterates in Canada do differ from those of more literate Canadians.

THEY ARE POORER

The personal income of literates is 44 per cent more than that reported by illiterates.

The real gap is probably larger. Only two-thirds of illiterates answered the income questions, the survey report notes, suggesting defensiveness about low earnings.

Because 30 per cent of all illiterates are retired, the income gap is greatest for those over 55 years old, with literates reporting almost twice as much personal income. For the 18- to 34-year-old group, the gap narrows to 13 per cent.

Not surprisingly, this lower income level influences many aspects of an illiterate's life and helps explain:

- Lower attendance at movies, plays, concerts and sporting events with 56 per cent of illiterates saying they ever go, compared to 85 per cent of literates;
- The dramatic difference in writing cheques at least once a month: 83 per cent of literates versus 44 per cent of illiterates;
- Low participation in clubs or organizations with nearly half of all illiterates saying they don't belong to any, compared to just over one-third of literates who are non-joiners.

THEY'RE TRAPPED IN DEAD-END JOBS

Fewer than half of illiterates who have ever worked said reading and writing was either extremely or very important for their jobs while three-quarters of literates did.

The difference largely disappeared when interviewers asked if it was extremely or very important to read and write well. Seventy-one per cent of illiterates said yes compared to 85 per cent of literates.

"They're trapped in a backwater of the employment jungle," says Dr. Paul Nesbitt, a psychologist with The Creative Research Group which supervised the literacy survey.

"They don't see themselves as held back because often they don't appear to see the better jobs they might aspire to."

THEY NEED HELP BUT WON'T TAKE CLASSES

The stigma of illiteracy comes out clearly in two contradictory sets of answers.

Only one in five illiterates admits that reading and writing is holding them back in their job or elsewhere.

But half later told the survey interviewers they need help from family or friends in reading government notices, filling out a bank deposit slip, writing letters, reading instruction on a medicine bottle, finding a telephone number or reading product names in the store.

Only 10 per cent of all functional illiterates said they might ever take remedial instruction to improve their reading and writing.

— CALAMAI

Five million Canadians

OTTAWA — Five million Canadians cannot read, write or use numbers well enough to meet the literacy demands of today's society — and one-third are high school graduates, an exclusive nationwide survey has disclosed.

Half of these functional illiterates have been left out of past official estimates of illiteracy because they reached Grade 9 or better, the federal government's arbitrary definition of being literate.

The $295,000 Southam Literacy Survey, financed by Southam Inc. and seven newspapers, tested 2,398 adults in their homes with a battery of more than 40 literacy-related questions.

It actually identified 4.5 million Canadian residents who fail to reach a minimum level of functional literacy suggested by a national panel representing a cross-section of Canadians.

But Southam's researchers estimate they did not reach at least 500,000 more illiterate adults among unsurveyed groups of prisoners, transients, the mentally retarded, natives on reserves, people living north of the 60th parallel and all immigrants unable to speak either official language.

Even without this extra half million, 24 per cent of Canadian residents 18 and older are illiterate in English or French. Excluding all immigrants, illiteracy still affects 22 per cent of Canadian-born adults — more than one in five.

These illiterates are an army in numbers only. They have no leaders, no power, little support, few weapons and no idea where they are headed. Darkness and hopelessness are usually their banners.

"No one who can read knows our anger," says one illiterate. "You're left in the dark. You just try to carry on the best you can. We're living in a different world."

The picture is not totally black. Many illiterates say they are content with their limited reading and writing skills, even though half must get help from family or friends for tasks like reading government notices or product labels in supermarkets.

The survey's definition of functional literacy was the ability to use printed and written information to function in society. Experts agree this approach is more relevant today than the traditional definition of just being able to sign a name or read a simple sentence.

That definition produced these survey findings:

- Illiteracy increases from west to east, rising from a low of 17 per cent among adults in British Columbia to an astonishing high of 44 per cent in Newfoundland;
- Illiteracy is higher among francophones than anglophones — 29 per cent to 23 per cent — but the gap is biggest

Leader-Post graphic

are considered illiterate

among the oldest and vanishes among the young;

• Nearly half of the 4.5 million functional illiterates identified in the survey are 55 or older, even though this group only accounts for 29 per cent of the total population.

• Half the 4.5 million illiterates say they went to high school and one-third say they graduated. One in 12 who claimed to be university graduates still tested as functionally illiterate;

• Poverty and education play major roles in deciding whether illiteracy is transmitted from one generation to the next. The children of the jobless, the working class and the poorly educated are much more liable to be illiterate.

Illiteracy is also higher among men than women. Of 100 illiterates, men outnumber women 53.5 to 46.5. These and other data provide the most complete picture yet of a way of life that is growing in Canada, not shrinking as officials had forecast.

The survey and other Southam research strongly suggest 100,000 illiterates a year are being added to the Canadian population by a flawed education system and humanitarian immigration policies. Yet deaths, emigration and literacy training only reduce the ranks by an estimated 70,000 annually.

"It's not as life-threatening as AIDS, nor as terrible as mass murder, nor as current as acid rain," says McGill University education professor Jon Bradley of illiteracy in general. "But in the long run it could be a far more damaging threat to Canadian society."

The dangers are stark: 10 per cent of Canadian adults can't understand the dosage directions on a medicine bottle; 20 per cent can't correctly select a fact from a simple newspaper article; 40 per cent can't figure out the tip on a lunch bill; more than 50 per cent have serious troubles using bus schedules; and nearly 60 per cent misinterpret the key section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Yet less than two per cent of the 4.5 million functional illiterates are now enrolled in the nation's inadequate literacy programs, some already forced to turn away students this month because of chronic government underfunding. Adult education is generally neglected by governments in Canada compared to Europe, four months of interviews confirm.

The Southam survey also discovered only one in 10 of all illiterates would ever consider taking remedial classes — bad news for the national literacy coalition which is about to publicly demand that federal and provincial governments provide free adult basic education.

Such classes don't guarantee literacy; dropout rates of 50 per cent have been recorded. Success can be long and costly — several years of studying for the majority of illiterates who can attend only a few hours a week.

The progress of the Southam survey over the summer has been closely monitored by governments and literacy workers. The first are fearful the totals will be embarrassingly high with 1990 likely to be declared The Year of Literacy by the United Nations. The second are afraid the wrong image or low totals could harm their efforts.

— CALAMAI

Charter of Rights and Freedoms

(Section 15)

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Question 1: Which of these two statements best summarizes what this section is trying to say?

A. Everyone is equal in Canada.

B. The law in Canada cannot favor one person over another.

Only 39 per cent correctly picked B.

Question 2: Mark any words in the section which spell out the kinds of inequal legal treatment that are not allowed in Canada.

The correct answer would be to underline any or all of the words from "without discrimination" on to the end of the paragraph. Fifty-four per cent answered correctly.

Source: The Creative Research Group

Southam Graphics: Rob Ludlow

How the survey was done

OTTAWA — The literacy survey by Southam News is based on face-to-face interviews with 2,398 adults in 148 Canadian communities and rural areas. Respondents were selected at 418 sampling points.

Three samples were drawn for the survey: a random cross-section of the entire population, extra samples for some cities and regions and a special over-sample of 21- to 25-year-olds.

Excluded from the survey are those under 18, residents north of the 60th parallel, transients, members of the armed forces, natives living on reserves and anyone in an institution such as a prison, hospital or nursing home.

Interviews were conducted in English or French in the respondents' homes between May 6 and June 10. The results have been weighted to ensure that each segment is represented in proportion to its share of the population.

In particular, the results were weighted to reflect the most recent Statistics Canada data on how far Canadians got in school.

Following general industry practice, all respondents were given two $1 lottery tickets to be interviewed.

Because of the stigma attached to illiteracy, adults with low literacy might avoid any door-to-door poll, but special checks by interviewers indicate this was not a major problem in the Southam survey.

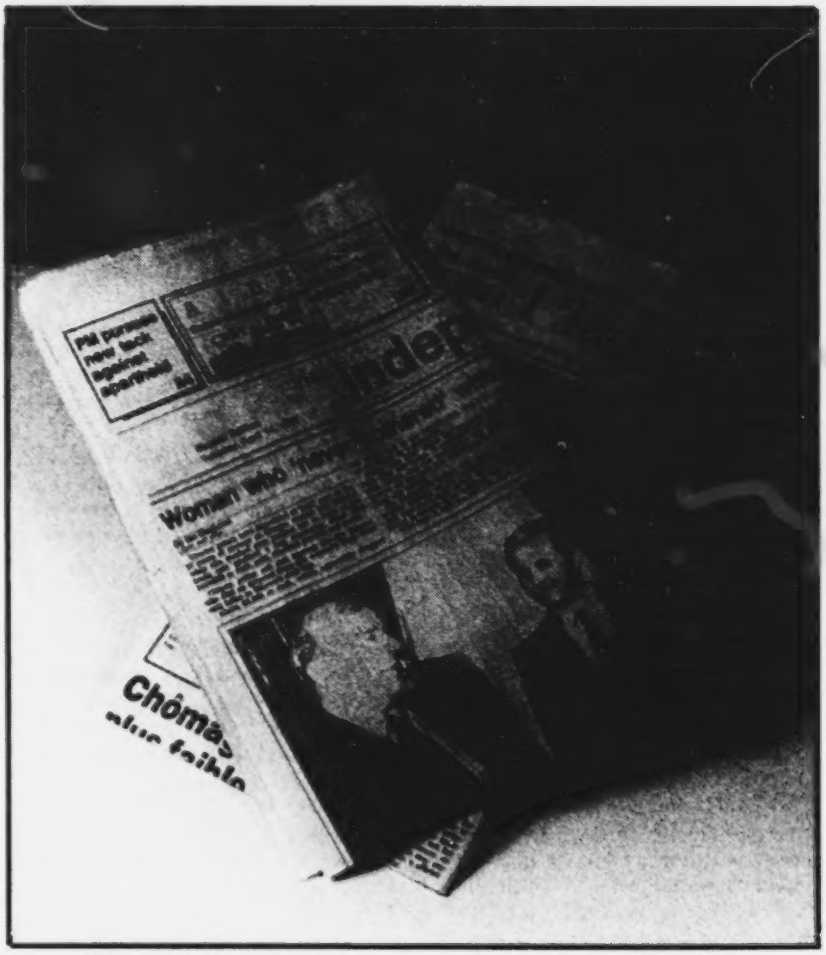
Literacy was defined as reading and writing skills in either of Canada's two official languages. Extra steps were also taken to learn as much as possible about potential respondents who spoke neither English nor French.

An average interview took 80 minutes and involved two parts: a background and activity questionnaire followed by a test of reading, writing and numbers skills using 61 items based on everyday life.

These literacy items were adapted from a 1985 U.S. survey for the National Assessment of Educational Progress by substituting Canadian spellings, materials and topical references.

Respondents could take as long as they liked to tackle the literacy items. The 61 items were divided into two smaller and overlapping sets, each answered by half the respondents.

"We also told people to put on glasses if they usually wore them and handed them copies of the items to be read, which they could hold on to while answering. They didn't have to rely on memory," explained Dr. Paul Nesbitt of The Creative Research Group, the Toronto organization that supervised the survey.



These fake newspapers were used to test reading skills

Literacy in reading newspaper articles was measured using two specially printed newspapers, one English and the other French. The full-size papers were printed by the Ottawa Citizen, with co-operation from Le Droit, Ottawa's French-language daily.

An outside literacy consultant, Jean-Paul Hautecoeur, advised on the French-language adaptatión of the survey questionnaire. Ten other experts in literacy, adult education and journalism also provided extensive advice on the design of the background questionnaire.

The standards for literacy and illiteracy were determined by a 25-member panel drawn from all walks of life.

Although the total sample is 2,398, the national picture is based on a weighted sample of 1,503. In 19 cases out of 20, results based on a theoretical random sample of this size will differ by no more than 2.5 percentage points in either direction from the results obtained by interviewing all adult Canadians.

The theoretical margin of error is larger for smaller groups. For instance, figures for Quebec by itself could range plus or minus five percentage points.

— CALAMAI

The full technical report of the Southam Literacy Survey may be purchased at $50 per copy. Write: Southam Literacy Survey, Anne Labelle, Southam News, Suite 512, 151 Sparks St., Ottawa, Ont., K1P 5E3.

Computer data tapes are also available. Researchers or educational bodies should get in touch with Labelle at the same address. Telephone (613) 236-0491.

Who is illiterate?

OTTAWA — Are you a functional illiterate? You probably are if you can't:

- Read and understand the right dosage from an ordinary bottle of cold syrup (10 per cent of adult Canadians can't);
- From six road signs, pick out which one warns of a traffic light ahead (13 per cent can't);
- Figure out the change from $3 if you ordered a Lancaster Special sandwich and onion soup (33 per cent can't);
- Sign your name in the correct spot on a social insurance card (11 per cent can't);
- Circle the expiry date on a driver's licence (six per cent can't);
- Answer four questions about a meeting arrangement, including the date, time and people involved (between 15 and 17 per cent can't);
- Circle the long distance charges on a telephone bill (29 per cent can't).

These are the 10 items that a Southam literacy "jury" agreed every Canadian should be able to answer correctly just to get by in today's society.

The jury — drawn from across the country and from all walks of life — overwhelmingly chose these 10 as the most fundamental to daily life of the 38 items on one version of the Southam literacy test. In addition to the two dozen individuals named at the end of this article, literacy students in Saint John, N.B., also passed collective judgment and were counted as one vote.

Twenty of the 25 jurors agreed that these items described a minimal level of functional literacy that they found acceptable. The jurors gave their opinions independently after looking at both the literacy questions and what answers counted as correct.

"Although we could have insisted that people get all 10 correct to be considered literate by the jury's standards, we decided to be more lenient," explains Dr. Paul Nesbitt of The Creative Research Group which supervised the survey.

"If you get three or more of those key 10 items wrong, then you're functionally illiterate; if you get only two wrong — that's only eight right — then you're marginal, but still literate," says Nesbitt.

Creative Research also assigned another cut-off point for anyone who got eight or more wrong out of the 10. They're called basic illiterates.

In the technical report by Creative Research, basic and functional illiterates are combined as "illiterates" and marginal and full literates are together called "literates."

In fact, the literacy jurors wanted a much higher level of minimal functional literacy, on average demanding 64 per cent correct out of the 38 items. This standard would have meant that 37 per cent of Canadian adults were functionally illiterate.

Asked about a "desirable" level of literacy, the jurors said Canadians should correctly answer all but a few of the 38 items.

Using the jury was a Canadian innovation of the "real-life" measurement of literacy, an approach pioneered in the United States in 1973 and since copied in Australia and Britain.

Many Canadian literacy experts applauded in advance the decision by Southam and Creative Research to reject the grade level approach to literacy used by Statistics Canada and UNESCO. According to their definition, anyone with nine years of schooling is automatically literate while anyone with less is automatically illiterate.

"It's just an administrative indicator," says Michael Collins, an adult education professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

"Go into a school and look. Grade 9 is no guarantee on its own that people can read and write."

Rather than grade levels, recent literacy surveys have related literacy to standards of competency in everyday tasks.

No objections to the survey questions were received from the literacy students on the jury or the jurors who worked in smelters, steel mills, on farms or as literacy co-ordinators.

— *CALAMAI*

Southam's literacy jury included:

Margaret Atwood, author, Toronto.

Jim Bennett, vice-president, legislative affairs, Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Harold Cardinal, native rights advocate, Enilda, Alta.

Louise Coulombe-Joly, president, Quebec women's education group, AFEAS.

Thomas D'Aquino, president, Business Council on National Issues.

Rita Deverell, journalism professor, actress, Regina.

Ken Dryden, lawyer, Toronto.

Linda Forsythe, literacy co-ordinator, Vancouver.

William D. Gilmour, forester, Port Alberni, B.C.

Jean-Paul Hautecoeur, literacy consultant, Montreal.

Lorne MacIntyre, steelworker, Sydney, N.S.

Charlie Mayrs, advertising executive, Vancouver.

Doug Gibson, book publisher, Toronto.

Louise Miller, executive director, coalition of Quebec literacy groups.

Farley Mowat, author, Port Hope, Ont.

Sheila O'Brien, oil industry executive, Calgary.

Raleigh Orr, disabled rights advocate, Truro, N.S.

Ray Pegley, smelter worker, Kitimat, B.C.

Marj Stefan, grain farmer, Limerick, Sask.

Sami Tawfik, placement consultant, Ottawa.

Janet Turnbull, founder, Business Task Force on Literacy.

Marion Wells, literacy co-ordinator, Saint John, N.B.

Bob White, president, Canadian Auto Workers.

Stan Wilson, cattleman, Nanton, Alta.

Adult literacy students, Saint John Learning Centre, N.B.

Farm life, remoteness have

It's with both laughter and tears that Mike remembers the time almost 30 years ago when he realized his six-year-old son could read better than he could.

"Danny came home from school one day all hot for me to help him read a book the teacher had given him for homework.

"I tried the best I could to help him, but I just couldn't sound out the words," says the 60-year-old Regina man, whose formal education ended when he was pulled out of Grade 2 during the Great Depression of the 1930s to help on the family farm near Oxbow.

"Finally he just looked at me and said 'That's okay Dad, I think I can try doing this on my own.' I felt so ashamed at the time, though it's funny now to think how a little kid could read better than his father."

Mike has never forgotten that day, but it wasn't until almost 20 years later that he started the long process of learning how to read and write with the help of a volunteer tutor.

"By the time I turned 50, I realized that I didn't want to feel stupid because I couldn't read or write," Mike says. "I also wanted to be able to read letters from my son and his grandchildren, who live in Ontario."

Even though he is at the stage where he can now indulge in one of his favorite pastimes — exchanging letters with his grandchildren — Mike is reluctant to let too many people in on the secret he has held for so many years. It's one of the reasons he doesn't want to be identified by his real name.

"I know how to read now, but I don't want people to feel sorry for me because there was a time when I couldn't."

For thousands of other Saskatchewan adults, a book still holds no meaning or pleasure — just mystery.

Writing isn't any easier. Some may have learned to sign their names, but trying to write anything more only leads to embarrassment and frustration.

Nearly 178,000 people in Saskatchewan are considered "functionally illiterate," meaning they're reading at a Grade 9 level or less. That's one in every four Saskatchewan residents over the age of 15, compared to a national average of one in five.

It is a problem that cuts across all economic, cultural and social boundaries. It affects women, men, old people, the young and poor as well as those who come from more affluent families. Illiteracy can be found in cities as well as rural areas.

About 70 per cent of functional illiterates were born in Canada, which has one of the best-financed school systems in the world.

Bess Gilkinson, who co-ordinates literacy volunteer programs in Prince Albert, says there isn't any one reason why Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of functional illiteracy.

"It's a combination of a lot of the things that lead to illiteracy anywhere — isolation, a large rural population, poverty, students who can't cope with the school system . . . you name it."

Gilkinson says illiteracy is often associated with "have-not" regions, pointing out that Newfoundland has the highest illiteracy rate in Canada — around 30 per cent — followed by the other Maritime provinces and Quebec.

About 28,000 Saskatchewan residents have less than a Grade 5 education, with many of them close to being completely illiterate. There are no figures available to show how many Saskatchewan residents can't read and write at all.

The rest are able to read and write to some degree, but don't have the literacy skills to compete in the tough job market.

"You have to remember, there was once a time (about 50 or 60 years ago) when Grade 8 was about as far in school as most people went," says Al Hergott, assistant director of the Education Department's community college branch. "It was often more important for children to stay home and help their families or go to work. It was also a lot easier for people without much education to get a job."

"Now the standards and employment opportunities have changed. It's expected that everyone will graduate from high school."

Census figures from 1981 show that about half of the 200,000 Saskatchewan residents over the age of 60 had less than Grade 9 education, while only 13 per cent of the 442,000 residents between 15 and 60 years of age were considered functionally illiterate.

But there are more than 10,000 Saskatchewan residents between the ages of 15 and 25 who have an education of less than Grade 9, a figure that worries Hergott "because these are people who will soon be entering what is considered to be the prime of their lives."

Though schools are graduating more students now than they ever did, (studies show 80 per cent of Grade 2 students in 1976 were still in school 10 years later) there are many who slip through the system.

They include students who drop out of school, as well as those who are pushed through the system without proper reading and writing skills. Many of them have learning disabilities that weren't diagnosed or discovered too late.

"You perhaps don't get as many students leaving school to help out the family today, but most of the students who are dropping out are disillusioned and think school is a waste of time," says Education Department consultant Bob Arkell. "These young people are at an extreme disadvantage when it comes to looking for a job."

Hergott also says the relationship between poverty and illiteracy can be compared to "the age old question of what came first, the chicken or the egg?

"Are people poor because they can't read and write or do they not learn how to read and write because they're poor?"

It's clear low education is associated with low income levels. The 1984 median income for families where the main breadwinner had less than a Grade 9 education was $24,011 — about half that of families headed by a university graduate .

Immigrants also find that illiteracy is a major stumbling block. About 30 per cent of adults with less than a Grade 9 education weren't born in Canada.

"Not only are you dealing with people who are stuck in dead-end jobs because they're not proficient enough in English, but there are many new Canadians who are illiterate in their native language," says Gail Montague, a co-ordinator of English as a Second Language programs at Regina Plains Community College. "For them, even holding a pen properly can be a new and strange experience."

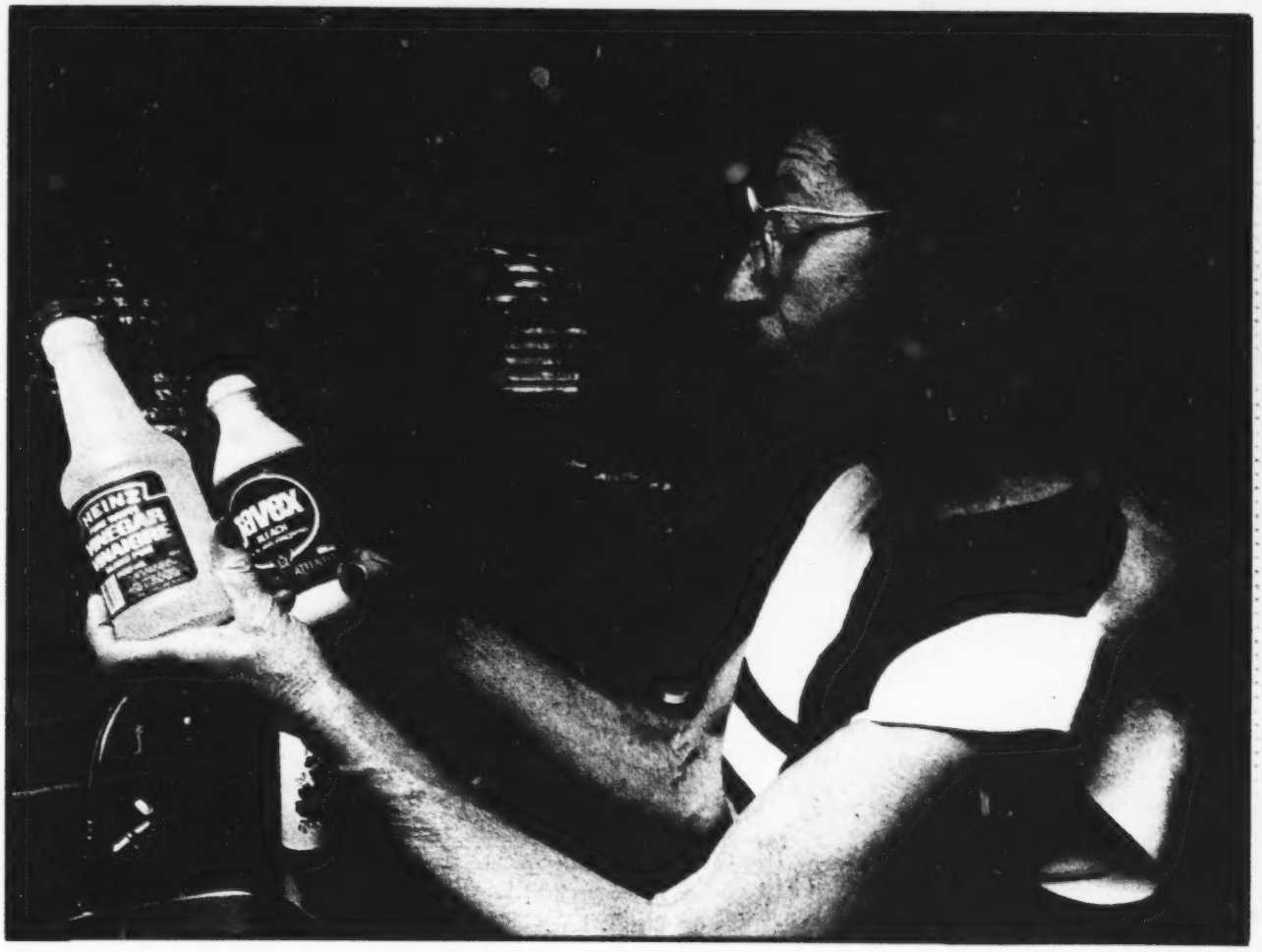
Illiteracy also has a strong connection with people isolated in rural communities, where the nearest schools are often miles away.

According to 1981 census figures, about 30 per cent of the 250,000 people who live in Saskatchewan's rural areas are functionally illiterate, compared to 20 per cent of the 380,000 people who live in towns and cities.

In the Saskatchewan of the 1940s and 1950s, a young province with an agrarian economic base, isolation was a fact of life. In many cases, it was easier for children in remote rural communities to stay home rather than be bused for miles to school each day.

"It's relatively recently that children were no longer hindered from going to school because of isolation," says Bruce

had effect on Saskatchewan



Leader-Post photo

If you couldn't read, confusing these similarly-packaged items might be a disaster

Dawson, principal at Parkland Regional College in Yorkton.

In the north, isolation is still an important factor in illiteracy.

Penny Carriere, co-ordinator of Adult Basic Education courses at the Northlands Career College in La Ronge, says as many as half of northern residents are considered functionally illiterate.

"Illiteracy in the north also has a lot to do with the lifestyle and culture of the people living in that part of the province.

"The way of life of here isn't particularly conducive to acquiring a complete education," Carriere says. "Life is more transient. Many people go on the traplines for weeks at a time. When they take the children along, their schooling is disrupted."

While the economic costs of illiteracy are high, considering that one-third of those with less Grade 9 schooling are unemployed, the human and social costs of not being being able to read and write are also tremendous.

"The stigma attached to illiteracy is enormous," says Barb Olynuk, president of the Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education Association, a group representing adult educators.

"There's a tendency in society to equate illiteracy with a lack of intelligence. Of course this isn't true, but it means that illiterate people are ashamed to admit they can't read or write."

Illiterates often prefer to bluff their way through a difficult situation rather than tell others — even those they know best — that they have a problem. It can mean suddenly losing their glasses or hurting their arm to avoid embarrassment.

Then there are the disastrous moments when illiteracy is exposed.

University of Regina education professor Mary Cronin tells the story of an illiterate baker who was asked to write "Good Luck" on a cake. Because it was a rush job, he decided to write the message himself, rather than wait for another employee.

"The customer came in to pick up the cake, took one look and was quite puzzled. Instead of "Good Luck," the baker had written "Go Look." The poor fellow was mortified."

— OLIJNYK

Little progress made here

By the provincial government's own estimates, the war against illiteracy so far has nicked but a sliver off the number of residents who read worse than a typical 10-year-old.

Five of 16 regional colleges offer Grades 1-4 through adult basic education courses. Some colleges and volunteer organizations such as READ Saskatoon and the Regina Public Library provide one-on-one tutoring from volunteers. Still other students seek help through numerous drop-in learning centres throughout the province.

But according to a "blueprint for action" from the Education Department, all efforts combined are reaching only about 600 of Saskatchewan's 27,875 so-called basic illiterates — adults with less than a Grade 5 education.

Put another way, only one in about 45 people who might need help is getting it.

"Despite the best efforts of current literacy and basic education programs, thousands of Saskatchewan adults cannot read daily newspapers, fill in a form for employment, help their children with homework, read warning notices on products containing dangerous chemicals, read street signs, read restaurant menus or even respond to an optometrist's eye chart," the paper said.

It recommended a multi-pronged attack on the problem, led by a provincial literacy campaign announced by Education Minister Lorne Hepworth in April.

"The campaign will be the first concerted, sustained attack on this problem ever undertaken in this province," Hepworth said at the time. "It will significantly break down a major barrier for many of our province's adults."

The plan:

- Set up a literacy council of 15-25 people from the ranks of educators, the libraries, the media, businesses, service clubs and volunteer groups to oversee the campaign.
- Ask libraries, regional colleges and literacy groups to take the lead and provide them with money to hire program co-ordinators.
- Strike a goal of 10,000 new adult readers over the next three years.
- Build upon existing strengths, such as volunteer tutoring programs in the Yorkton-Melville district, Saskatoon and Regina. "One important point arising from literacy research is that almost every illiterate adult has at least one literate adult who consistently helps him or her with such materials as daily mail," the paper said. "This suggests that tutors do not have to be highly-educated and they do not need to be formally trained. An initial commitment of 18 hours of tutoring training, or less in some programs, is sufficient to enable a volunteer to provide tutoring assistance in basic reading skills."
- Develop a media campaign to attract new volunteer tutors and solicit support from volunteer groups, service clubs and churches.
- Put up the dollars for libraries to build their collections of literacy materials and make space available for tutoring.
- Enlist the help of business and industry with particular attention paid to on-site literacy training.
- Prevent further illiteracy by developing new methods of keeping students in school until Grade 12.

— PETRIE

Defining has been

OTTAWA — Reading and writing were around for 5,000 years before governments first tried to define literacy.

That was in 1948 when the United Nations proposed "the ability to read and write a simple message" as a working definition.

The UN and scores of experts have been trying to agree on a definition ever since, without success. Conferences of the erudite International Reading Association degenerate into brawls when academics champion their favored definition.

About all they agree on is literacy isn't black-and-white, off-and-on, either-or.

It stretches from the cultural heights of novels by Robertson Davies to the sidewalk advertisement for a centre "dedicated to helping every women feel good about fitness."

Below ungrammatical signs lies a realm of increasingly incoherent writing and people who can barely manage to sound out words on a billboard.

In 1861, the census of Upper and Lower Canada asked residents to mark a space if anyone in the household was unable to read or write. By that definition, scholars now estimate 10 per cent of Hamilton's population was illiterate, many of them Irish Catholic immigrants.

Today's equivalent might be circling the date on a driver's licence, which only 94 per cent of adults did correctly on the Southam Literacy Survey (nearly 96 per cent if immigrants are excluded.)

"It's very, very rare to find people who can't read anything provided that they can see and can talk," says Frank Smith, a reading specialist of international stature who lives in Victoria, B.C.

Yet the past century has brought compulsory universal education, higher expectations and a hodge-podge of specialized "literacies" — computer literacy, cultural literacy, humane literacy, geographical literacy, civic literacy, survival literacy, employment literacy, elective literacy, citizenship literacy, alliteracy and finally, numeracy — which is being literate about numbers.

literacy difficult

"If you were really devious enough, you could come up with a definition that ensured that illiteracy doesn't exist," says an official of the council of ministers of education, the national body at which provincial ministers compare notes.

Several Third World countries have, in fact, proclaimed the eradication of illiteracy after mass campaigns. Within a few years, however, they were asking foreign aid donors for money for more literacy training.

"In four months time, everybody got a certificate because they could write their name and all of a sudden that's literacy," says James Draper, a professor of adult education in Toronto at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

In Canada and other industrialized countries, however, the debate has focused on "functional literacy," meaning the ability to effectively engage (or function) in the activities of the community.

But who decides if the functioning is effective?

One faction says the individual. If people aren't bothered by their own low skills, then they're not functionally illiterate even if, like a Grade 12 graduate now in a Windsor literacy program, they must write down 2 + 2 in order to add to 4, instead of doing it in their heads.

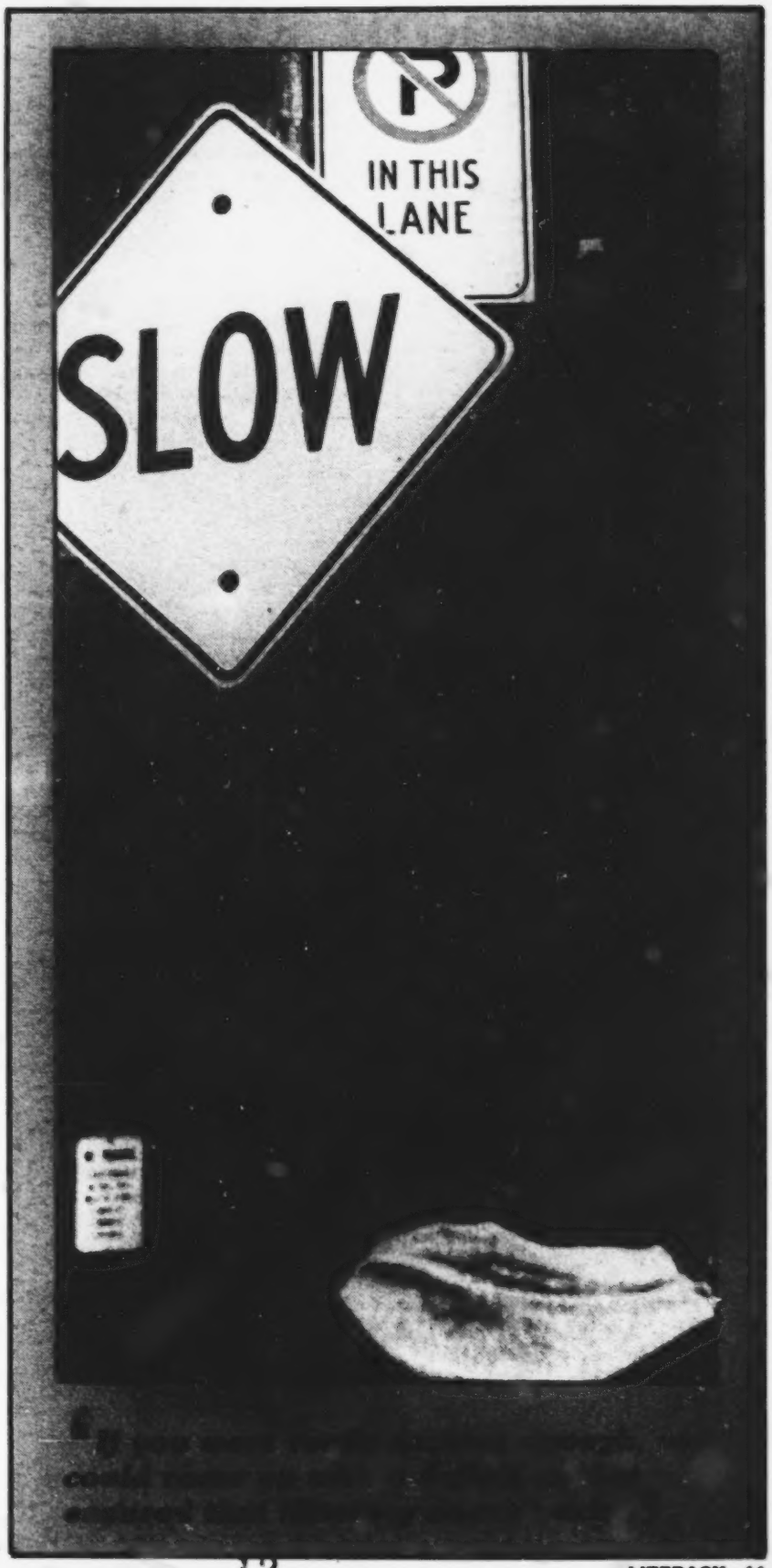
But the majority view defines functional literacy as having the reading, writing and numbers skills necessary to perform tasks demanded by the community and, especially, by the job.

In its landmark 1985 study of Americans aged 21 to 25, the National Assessment of Education Progress went one step further, talking only about levels of literacy rather than using the term illiterate.

Literacy, said NAEP, is "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

As expected, others disagreed and the debate rages on.

— CALAMAI



School system takes heat

When little Johnny or Janey grows up without learning how to read or write, an accusing finger is often pointed at the school system.

With more than $1,300 per capita being spent on education in Saskatchewan annually, the question people often ask is how can illiteracy exist in a province where education is a right and not a privilege — at least until a child turns 16?

"It's hard for people to understand that despite all the money we spend on education, there are many people who still slip through the system," says Education Department consultant Bob Arkell.

"What they don't realize is that it's virtually impossible for the school system to ensure that every child will complete high school and guarantee that every child who leaves the school system has adequate reading and writing skills."

Arkell says there are just too many factors — health, economic, social and cultural — that make it too difficult for schools to reduce the dropout rate to zero.

"Some people just aren't ready to learn at the age where society decrees that they shall be educated. We can do our best, but perhaps the better solution is to look at helping adults pick up on what they missed."

Arkell says the Kindergarten-Grade 12 system needs to have a stronger relationship with the adult education system.

He says the recent decision to amalgamate the old Education Department, which dealt with elementary and high school education, with the Advanced Education and Manpower Department, which handled adult education, will go a long way towards strengthening that relationship.

"We have to look upon education as a life-long process, something that continues long after people graduate from high school. It should also be able to deal with the needs of adults who didn't make it through the school system the first time," he says.

About 178,000, or one in four, Saskatchewan residents over 15 have less than a Grade 9 education. By Statistics Canada definition, these are the 'functionally illiterate.'

Though there aren't statistics on the number of people who can't read or write at all, about 28,000 have less than Grade 5 education and are regarded as "basic illiterates."

Among the 15-25 age group, there are an estimated 10,000 functional illiterates in the province.

"These young people will have trouble making a satisfying living because they don't have the skills to compete with high school and post-secondary graduates," says Arkell.

However, Arkell points to figures that show the number of adults who don't have adequate reading and writing skills has fallen drastically during the 20th century.

"In the early 1900s, you'd be lucky if two to four per cent of the population graduated from high school," but as society realized the importance of education, more and more students graduated from high school. By the 1940s, about 40 per cent of students completed high school and by the 1970s, about 60 per cent graduated.

Arkell adds that the rate of functional illiteracy in Saskatchewan dropped more than 10 per cent between 1975 and 1985.

While young people still drop out of school, illiteracy is generally more prevalent among the old and middle-aged, who grew up at a time when having less than an elementary education was likely all that was needed for most occupations.

Eleanor Rourke, education director with the Regina Board of Education, says that as society put more emphasis on education, programs and laws were created to ensure that all students had the right to succeed in the school system.

"It isn't just that students have a right to attend school, it's a guarantee that school systems must do all they can to keep students in school and help them do the best that they can do."

As a result, Rourke says school boards have invested a lot of time and money in helping children with special needs.

"For example, we have programs for children with learning disabilities, for gifted students and for children with behavior problems," she says. "These children weren't even considered to require specialized teaching methods until the last 20 years or so. They were often considered stupid, slow or unmotivated."

Rourke says it's programs such as these that have kept more Saskatchewan students in school longer.

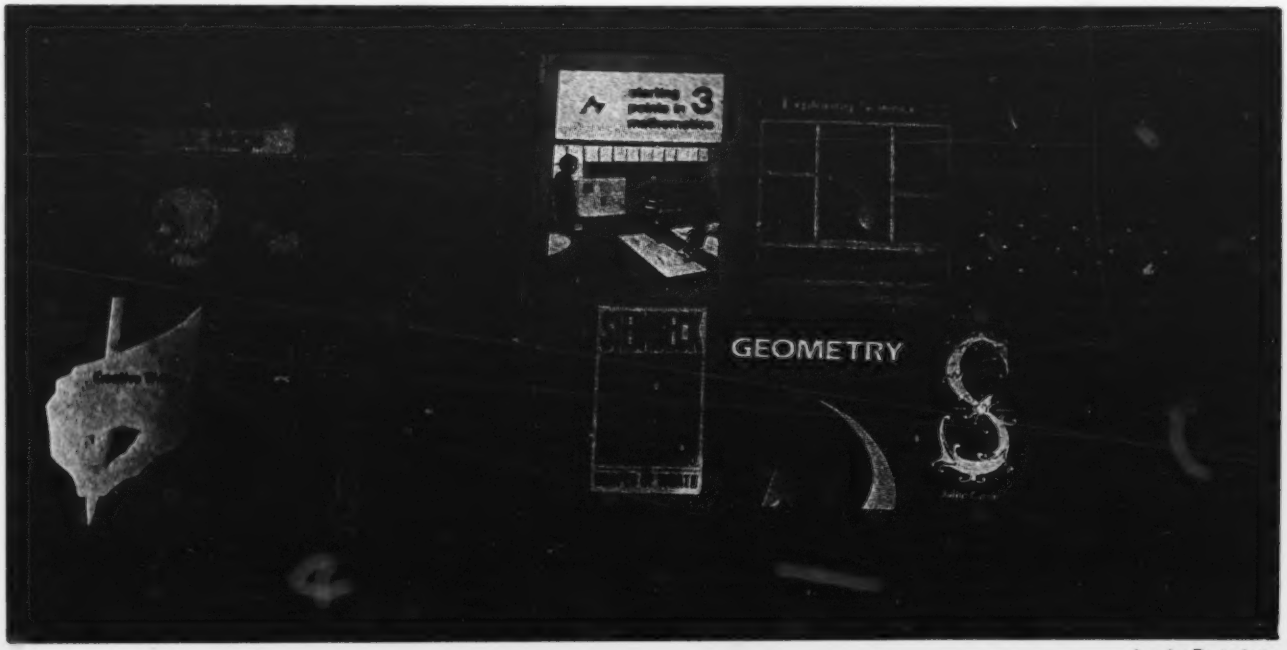
A 1981 study by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Associations (SSTA) indicated a high school dropout rate of slightly more than 30 per cent, compared to about 40 per cent in the 1970s.

A more recent study shows that 80 per cent of the students enrolled in Grade 2 in 1976 were still in school 10 years later.

"It doesn't mean that schools have reached perfection yet, but it does indicate we've come a long way in helping more students succeed," Rourke says.

Most experts agree that it would be impossible to reduce the dropout rate to

over those who can't read



Leader-Post photo

zero, since there are circumstances such as illness, family and social problems that make it impossible for many students to complete school.

However, Bess Gilkinson, a literacy volunteer co-ordinator in Prince Albert, says the education system could do better at keeping more students in school.

Schools still don't put enough stress on diagnosing students with learning disabilities or developing teaching methods that will help them learn better, says the former school teacher.

"A lot of the illiterate adults I've dealt with have learning disabilities that were never discovered until it was too late.

"These people often don't respond to the written word as well as they do to visual teaching methods or those that stress listening skills."

Gilkinson also believes that school systems should put more emphasis on grades 1, 2 and 3, since these are the years when children "need the most guidance in learning about the world around them."

"Schools should be looking at having classrooms with 15 students per teacher, not 25 students per teacher," she says.

As well, Gilkinson says the dropout rate among young people could be improved if the school curriculum was more relevant to students' lives.

"There are a lot of people who are disillusioned with school because they can't see the purpose of it," she says. "We should be adapting the curriculum to help students understand that what they learn does have some application to the real world."

The SSTA's 1981 dropout study lists the two top reasons students gave for quitting as "I left school because I felt I was wasting my time" and "I left school because what I was learning was not relevant to my choice of career."

"Making the education relevant to everyone — whether they're native, living in northern Saskatchewan or going to school in suburban Regina — is the one area where school boards could try harder," says Arkell.

But he also admits that school systems can't go so far out of their way to be relevant that important pieces of information are left out of a student's education.

"It may be true that knowing who the kings and queens of England are doesn't have much to do with the life of an Indian trapper's son in northern Saskatchewan," Arkell says. "But if that student wants to succeed at university, it may very well be that having a knowledge of these kinds of things is important."

Bruce Dawson, principal of Parkland Regional College in Yorkton, says he's surprised that many students graduate from high school without picking up the necessary reading and writing skills.

"Schools like to stress quality education, but there's often a tendency to pass students because no one likes to see little Johnny or Janey fail," says Dawson. Parents often vigorously oppose any decision to fail a child.

But failing children who can't read or write at the same level as their peers isn't always the best solution, Rourke says.

"Grades are somewhat artificial. What grade a child is in doesn't really mean too much because the education system today is geared towards helping children learn at their own pace."

It's important that students be with their peers even though they aren't functioning at the same academic level as the rest of the class, Rourke says.

She says that when she was a principal with the Saskatoon public school system, she had to deal with a 13-year-old from northern Sakatchewan who hadn't been to school since he was eight years old.

"I asked him what grade he wanted to be in. He said Grade 7, and that was fine with me. We just designed a program to meet his special needs and that allowed him to succeed at school at his own pace."

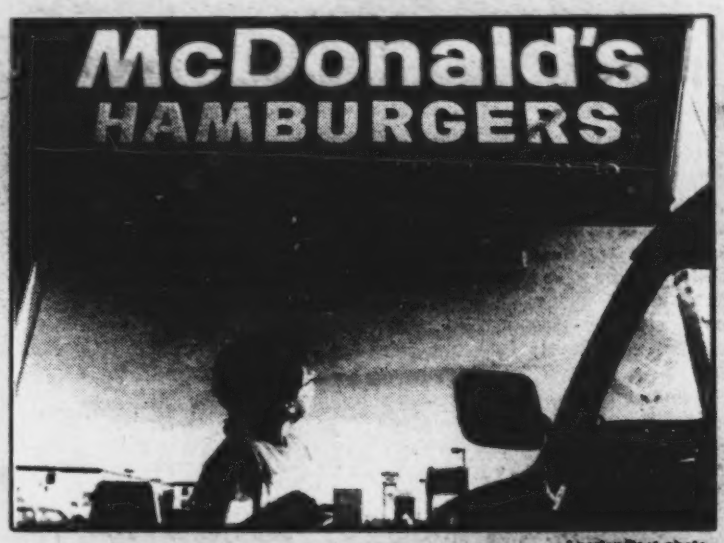
"If I had put him in a grade that matched his reading ability, he would have stuck out like a sore thumb."

— OLIJNYK

Education as a barrier

Frank Smith abandoned newspapering for a Harvard PhD and a career as an internationally acclaimed writer and lecturer on reading, writing and children's literacy.

Fresh from a summer afternoon's sailing off his Victoria, B.C. home, Smith talked with Southam News correspondent Peter Calamai about the failures of formal education.



Leader-Post photo

"Most kids know a good deal about reading before they come to school. Every kid can read the word McDonald's." ***— Frank Smith***

ON SCHOOLS

Schools aren't good places for learning any more than hospitals are good places for being sick in. It's very, very difficult to learn in school, including university. People learn much more outside of school.

REGIMENTATION

Most kids know a good deal about reading before they come to school. Every kid can read the word McDonald's. Most kids know what the television guide is for. Most kids can read store signs, they can read product labels, things like that. They know about writing birthday cards or leaving notes on refrigerator doors. They've got a good idea what reading is for and what writing is for. I think most kids are almost there by the time they come to school.

What school says to kids is forget all of that, that's outside of school. Inside of school, reading is a whole set of exercises, a whole set of drills. Kids are very lucky if they see anything that makes sense to them in reading instruction in schools. Most of the time they're filling in blanks and answering stupid questions when they've read stupid stories.

ON TEACHING

You know the best people for reading to five-year-old kids in school? It's seven-year-olds, not the teachers. And not the good readers but the mediocre ones, because the good readers will come on too strong and act like teachers and pick up all the mistakes. You don't need someone who is a brilliant reader, you just need someone who is a little better than you.

WHAT'S WRONG

If you persuade a kid that he can't write, then it's very, very difficult to get that kid to write. He does everything wrong. He worries about spelling, he worries about punctuation, he worries about all these things we say are the basics. He never gets off the ground.

Well, it's much the same with reading. If you persuade a kid that he can't read, what he'll start doing is all the things that are wrong — he'll struggle to sound out every word, he'll read too slowly, he'll read and then try to memorize everything that he reads. All these things destroy reading. But by the time you've been in school for 10 years or so, it's totally habitual. The problem with the adult illiterate is not that they have no idea how to read but that they've got all the wrong ideas about reading.

WHO TEACHES BEST

The people who really teach you to read and write are the authors that you read. You CAN teach yourself to read by reading a newspaper. You've got to read something that you know a good deal about in the first place, so if you know a good deal about sports, you read the sports report. There's a lot of evidence that that is the way kids learn to read and learn to write. Kids read stories written for children that are very predictable, that they've read 30 times, where they know every word in advance.

READ FAST

Reading's very much easier if you read faster, if you skim. If you're having difficulty reading a book, don't slog through it slowly and then go back and read it quickly. Go through it quickly the first time, so that you can get a good idea of what it is about, and then read it slowly.

ON LEARNING

We've all got learning disabilities, everyone has. I've tried for years to understand automobile engines and I still don't. I bet you can't understand the stock exchange, or do algebra or can't speak a second language, or whatever. It's not because we were born with some bit missing in our brain. At some time we were persuaded that this was something we couldn't learn and once you're persuaded that you can't learn something, then in fact it's very, very difficult for you to learn something. All your study habits go wrong and your attitude goes wrong and your motivation goes wrong and especially what goes wrong is that the people who try to teach you do it in a different way. They treat you like an idiot.

DON'T BLAME TV

The evidence is that people who read a lot also watch television a lot. Television doesn't destroy reading. If you're a reader, television can stimulate reading and promote reading. People watch Masterpiece Theatre and then go read the original novel. A lot of kids read the book spinoffs from the Saturday morning cartoons. In a sense, I think television is wrongly blamed for illiteracy.

U.S. tops Canada in tests

OTTAWA — We're not as smart as we thought.

In the first literacy test across the 49th parallel, young Americans score ahead of young Canadians in more than two-thirds of the questions, the Southam Literacy Survey reveals.

The test pitted adults aged 21 to 25 against each other on largely identical questions given as part of separate nationwide literacy surveys.

The Americans clearly outperform the Canadians both in general reading proficiency and in using everyday documents such as bus schedules and the Yellow Pages. The two groups are roughly equal in understanding prose while Canadians edge slightly ahead when handling numbers.

Overall, the U.S. youth scored 78 per cent correct compared to 74 for Canadians. One in five of the U.S. youths were either black or Hispanic. One in 10 of the Canadians were immigrants — all but a handful went to high schools here.

"This contradicts any illusions we may have of Canadian educational superiority," says Dr. Paul Nesbitt, a psychologist with The Creative Research Group which supervised the $295,000 survey financed by Southam Inc. and seven newspapers.

"The supposedly brightest age group of Canadians is significantly below Americans in reading proficiency. I have no reason to believe that is not true for the entire population," says Nesbitt.

Saskatchewan Education Minister Lorne Hepworth said the comparison was troubling because the U.S. was already lagging well behind Japan and West Germany in competitiveness.

"I think all of us have viewed the Canadian education system as one of the best in the world. So we have lulled ourselves into neutral. We never had to look over our shoulders and see anybody catching up."

American reaction was more cautious.

"If you say one group reads better or worse, it's important to know what tasks they do better or worse in," says Irwin Kirsch, project director of the literacy study published in 1986 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), based in Princeton, N.J.

"You need to focus on the nature of the problem, rather than just the extent."

The 59 NAEP literacy questions were given in 1985 to 3,538 Americans aged 21 to 25. For Southam to get a comparison, the same tasks were slightly adapted for 334 Canadians in the same age range which was oversampled in the national survey of 2,398 adults.

"All of us have viewed the Canadian education system as one of the best in the world . . . We never had to look over our shoulders and see anybody catching up."

— Lorne Hepworth

One glaring difference between the two nations is the high school drop-out rate. Roughly 25 per cent of these young Canadians did not finish high school, nearly double the U.S. average. Only inner-city blacks and Hispanics are as liable to drop out of high school as the average Canadian.

Among the Canadian dropouts, more than one in five is illiterate while one in eight graduates score as illiterate — 22 per cent versus 13 per cent.

Bilingualism can't be blamed for the differences between Canada and the U.S. Francophones were equal to anglophones — and sometimes better — on the Canadian literacy test, available in either language.

The lower reading proficiency of Canadians revealed by the test is considered large enough to be statistically significant and not just a chance result.

The survey shows Canadians fall down in the same places as Americans. They just fall down a bit farther.

Youth on both sides of the border perform reasonably well on school-type reading but have trouble with real-life written materials that require more complicated "information processing," like finding headings in the Yellow Pages or summarizing general themes.

Less than half the young Americans correctly calculated the wait for a bus from a schedule. Only one in three young Canadians got it right.

Similarly, barely half the Canadians could correctly summarize an article on the vocabulary of business; Americans were also low, two-thirds getting it right. A U.S. analysis called these "distressing weaknesses."

Other findings:

- In general reading proficiency, Canadians did better on a history article but worse on a newspaper rescue story with French names;
- In prose comprehension, Canadians did poorly on poetry but fared substantially better than Americans with a newspaper editorial;
- On everyday documents, Americans scored higher in twice as many questions, with Canadians especially weak on bus schedules and taking telephone messages;
- In dealing with numbers, Canadian youth briefly sparkled, outscoring Americans by 25 percentage points on the simple calculation of a lunch bill.

Concern over the low literacy of students has been rising. Last winter, Quebec Education Minister Claude Ryan said senior high school students wrote "as though they never studied grammar and syntax" when more than half failed an essay-writing test. The Liberals in Ontario made a $300-million budget boost for elementary schools a main campaign pledge.

Many Canadians agree the standards of education are dropping — 39 per cent say grade school is worse today than when they went to classes. Thirty per cent say it has improved.

— CALAMAI

Language training deemed inadequate

VANCOUVER — Nine women of various races are alternately giggling at the presence of a visitor and frowning at a white magnetic board in an immigrant language class.

"Fazia, put the flowers on the table beside the bed," instructs the teacher with a detectable Scottish burr.

Fazia tries. With covert pointing by a Somali classmate and whispered encouragement from a Vietnamese, she gingerly selects the metal cutout of a vase of flowers.

Proudly, she sticks it atop the bookcase on the board showing a typical Canadian bedroom right down to slippers and cat. Patiently, the teacher moves the vase to the bedside table.

Similar scenes are played out daily from coast to coast in English as a Second Language classes, poignant evidence of a government policy that almost guarantees a mounting literacy problem among immigrants.

Across the country, dedicated and frustrated teachers of English as a Second Language say they can't possibly produce any sort of literacy — and not much oral proficiency either — in the brief time allowed for most immigrant language programs.

"They've only got another month here before the end. They won't be anywhere near ready to survive," says the Vancouver instructor after the class.

The problem isn't new.

In 1984, the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment noted the longest provincially financed language course for immigrants lasted 30 weeks. Federal public servants spend 12 months on advanced bilingualism courses.

In Calgary, a Vietnamese group told the commission that "after four years of settlement, it is estimated that only about 20 per cent of Vietnamese-Canadian adults can communicate in some kind of English for everyday transactions."

Accurate national estimates don't exist for costs or numbers of immigrant language courses; the Nielsen task force could not even get an accurate picture of Ottawa's total bill.

But the investment is huge — many times more per capita and in total than overall public spending on adult literacy for native-born Canadians.

The federal Department of Employment and Immigration, for instance, paid community colleges nearly $60 million in the last fiscal year for language training to help 12,500 immigrants into the workforce. The Secretary of State gave $8 million to provincial governments to pay half the costs of language classes for about 90,000 new citizens who aren't likely to enter the workforce, mostly women and older immigrants.

Immigration is also placing an extra burden on education costs. The Toronto Board of Education this year expects to provide English-language classes for 30,000 — half of what Ontario's education ministry expects to fund across the province — and the costs continue into college.

"I don't know what we're going to do with all the immigrants here; we can't give them a diploma and we can't abandon them," says Frank Daly, dean of English at Toronto's Seneca Community College.

"Some of them have had tremendous life experiences — look at the Vietnamese boat people who were attacked by pirates — but they can't read and write English and I'm not going to say they can."

Refugee

Phuong Nguyen's last battle involved staring death in the face as he spent 134 days slowly starving on a Pacific sandbar.

But the 24-year-old Vietnamese fisherman, who arrived in Regina this spring from a refugee camp in the Philippines, has another battle on his hands — the struggle to learn English.

It may not be life-threatening like his last ordeal, but Phuong, one of thousands of "boat people" who endured much hardship to escape Communist Vietnam, knows that learning to read, write and speak English is his ticket to a satisfying new life in Canada.

Phuong is the sole survivor of a group of 23 refugees who fled Ho Chi Minh City on April 17, 1985, in a barely seaworthy nine-metre boat.

After the boat hit a sandbar, the group lived on raw seagulls, bird eggs and water from old rusty tanks found in the hulls of two warships beached on a sandbar since the Second World War.

When food and water began to dwindle and then disappear, members of the group died one by one. By the time a Taiwanese boat came to the rescue 134 days later, Phuong was the only one left.

Now that Phuong is safely in Canada, he can look at his future with more certainty. But first he must learn to speak English.

"I want to learn English so I can get a good job — maybe as a auto mechanic or a carpenter," Phuong says in halting but surprisingly good English, which he picked up through lessons during his 14-month stay at the refugee camp.

However, for Phuong to realize his dream, he will need more than the 20 weeks of occupational English lessons provided by the federal government under its refugee program.

With only a Grade 6 education, Phuong will probably have to complete the equivalent of a high school education to make him eligible for a training program or apprenticeship.

"It will be hard, but I want to try," he says.

The road to a brighter future still stretches out a long way before him, but right now Phuong is content to busy himself with the more immediate task of working on his English.

Two months ago he started classes with the English as a Second Language program at Regina Plains Community College. He proudly declares he's in "the highest level English class" at the college.

The bright, outgoing man also makes

takes on different struggle

Leader-Post photo

Phuong Nguyen shares a house in Regina with a family of fellow refugees

sure to take advantage of any chance to practise a language that circumstances have forced him to adopt as his own.

"I always try to speak English, not too much Vietnamese, even though I have Vietnamese friends in Regina," he says.

He also tries his best to converse with many of the 22 people who sponsored his immigration to Canada.

When it comes to reading and writing, Phuong admits he still has a long way to go. But he gamely picks up a newspaper and starts to sound out the words.

"Pronunciation is the hardest," he says, taking care to emphasize each syllable carefully.

"Sometimes it's hard to understand when Canadian people speak fast."

Gail Montague, who co-ordinates the English as a Second Language programs at the college, says many recent immigrants to Canada face a double whammy.

"Not only do most come to Canada illiterate in English, many also don't have much education in their own language. Often they come from repressive regimes where education was either not encouraged or denied outright."

Montague adds that even educated immigrants are held back until their English is good enough.

"You often see these people stuck in dead-end jobs when you know they're trained for something better," she says.

— OLIJNYK

Changes in workplace

OTTAWA — Two million workers across Canada are trapped in a tightening vice between their own illiteracy and a relentless rise in job demands for reading, writing and using numbers.

The Southam Literacy Survey confirms that illiterate workers — one out of six in the labor force — will be hit hard by the need for greater analytical and communications skills in most industries.

New types of jobs will make much greater literacy demands than before, government and industry studies predict, and existing jobs are being transformed by technologies like numerical control. Dairies are installing personal computers on the shop floor and the cabs of future tractor-trailer rigs will feature continuous print-outs on vehicle wear and tear.

"The ability to learn will be the premium skill of the future," declared the Economic Council of Canada in a jobs study this summer.

But only one in four of the nation's two million working illiterates think they need help with reading and writing on the job. Fewer than 10 per cent say they're even likely to take remedial instruction.

"It's a gloomy picture for programs trying to tackle literacy in the workplace," says Dr. Paul Nesbitt, a psychologist with The Creative Research Group which supervised the $295,000 survey financed by Southam Inc. and seven newspapers.

By interviewing and testing 2,398 adults in their homes in May and June, Creative Research identified the 24 per cent of Canadians whose literacy skills are too limited to handle simple day-to-day reading, writing and use of numbers. Nearly one-third of these functional illiterates are retired; of those looking for work, 86 per cent had some sort of job in the past 12 months.

Occupations volunteered by the illiterates roughly mirror the pattern for the Canadian workforce. This means illiterates aren't concentrated in industries that might be sheltered from the projected onslaught of learning-on-the-job.

Twice as many illiterates as literates told the survey interviewers that reading and writing aren't important in their job. But other studies have found 40 per cent of Canadian workers expect their jobs to be altered by technology over the next five years.

The survey's gloom is borne out by the start-up troubles of the first national workplace literacy program, being introduced in three regions by Laubach Literacy under a $1.2-million federal grant over three years. Laubach, which claims 5,000 volunteer literacy tutors coast-to-coast, is an offshoot of a U.S.-based program.

Literacy in the workplace usually means one employee helping another in basic reading, writing or mathematics, with the tutoring preferably done half on their own time and half the company's. Learning materials often come from the workplace — shop manuals, office forms or a machinist's shift report.

The three projects based in Sydney, N.S., St. Catharines, Ont., and Winnipeg are six months behind schedule and have struggled to reach an initial target of 20 students. One recurring problem is a backlash by management and workers to the very word "literacy."

Unions also have concerns about workplace literacy, fearing companies might use illiteracy as an excuse for firing an employee who asks for help.

Other parts of Canada are even farther behind, with workplace literacy

Bruce MacKinnon, Halifax Chronicle-Herald

will affect two million

programs blazing briefly and then disappearing.

When organizers of a literacy conference in Vancouver this spring wanted to spotlight literacy in the workplace they turned to B.C. forestry giant MacMillan Bloedel Ltd., which in turn had to reach all the way down to a subsidiary in Alabama because it doesn't have a Canadian program.

Some literacy advocates oppose in principle tying tutoring so closely to the job.

"You can train a person to be a mere cog," says Ruth Baldwin, president of World Literacy of Canada. "Or you can train him so he can have a number of skills, show initiative and take responsibility."

Many of these issues have already been wrestled to the ground in the U.S., which is several years ahead of Canada with active programs at major corporations such as General Motors, Xerox and Polaroid. Research has convinced these companies that blue-collar workers are now reading an average of 97 minutes daily on the job.

"Often it was three minutes here, two minutes there — forms, directions or a memo that showed where you had to drive a forklift truck to pick up something," says Larry Mikulecky, an Indiana University education professor who studies assembly lines and convenience stores to discover "real world" literacy demands.

Those demands, Mikulecky has found, mostly fall between the 9th and 12th Grade in reading difficulty. But 15 per cent of the time, they're even higher.

Most of Canada's working illiterates can't handle even the simple materials, the Southam Literacy Survey shows. For example, roughly one in five workers picked the wrong explanation in the survey when asked to explain why a clock-radio was being returned for repairs.

Yet hiring new workers isn't possible for most industries; an existing workforce that's just entering middle age and a dip in new entrants means about 85 per cent of Canadians working today will still be working by the year 2000.

"Employers can't fire all the workers because they're old-fashioned and hire new ones, because the turnover wouldn't be there with our demographics," says Judith Maxwell, chairman of the Economic Council of Canada.

Maxwell says studies show Canadian workers are flexible and employers can be forward-looking. They'll have to be. Between 1971 and 1981, technological change cut employment for workers with less than Grade 9 education by 15 per cent and by eight per cent for high school dropouts.

Computer projections by the council show the change accelerating, with job opportunities slashed in scores of occupations and new types of jobs created.

Says Maxwell: "We're becoming a society that has to live by its wits more than by its strong backs."

But U.S. literacy consultant David Harman insists companies that need workers will invest in retraining. If workers aren't needed, then companies won't hire, no matter how well-trained the job applicants are.

"It's always the jobs that create literacy, not the other way around."

— CALAMAI

HERMAN®

"Dropping out of school never done me no harm."

Job-ending accidents force

Thomas Ireland, Joe Pryor, John Molyneaux and Ed Youdan probably thought they'd never see the inside of a classroom again.

But for these men, all injured in work-related accidents during their 30s and 40s, completing their high school education is crucial to starting a new life.

In some ways, they had no choice but to return to school because their injuries have prevented them from going back to their previous jobs.

The four are currently in a high school adult education program run by the Regina Plains Community College and sponsored by the Workers' Compensation Board.

The men are intelligent and articulate, and definitely don't seem to fit the stereotype of "functionally illiterate," though three of them have less than a Grade 9 education.

However, it took an accident for each of them to realize that having the proper educational credentials is absolutely essential to switching careers for economic, health or other reasons.

Ireland, 45, dropped out of school when he was in Grade 6 to help with the family business. He eventually became a welder and spent 17 years on the job until the flames of the welding torch burned his lungs out, causing him to regularly black out.

"When I dropped out of school I had no regrets. But after I was stopped in my tracks by my injury, I realized that some important aspects of my education were missing," Ireland says.

He is now completing high school, concentrating in areas such as physics, so he can get into an electrician training program at the Saskatchewan Technical Institute in Moose Jaw.

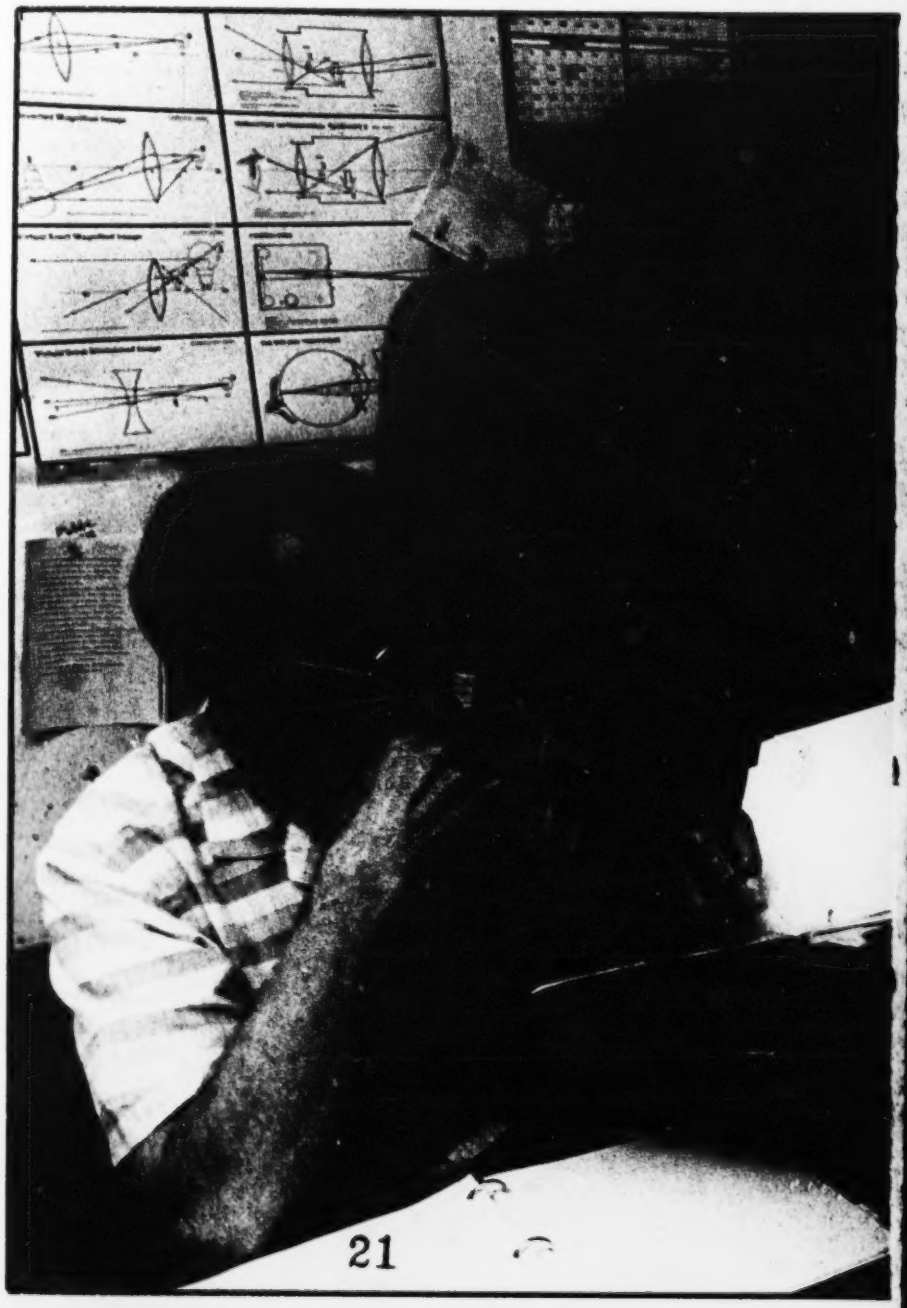
"There's a space waiting for me in the program. But I have to get through this stuff first," he says.

Pryor, 32, dropped out of school in Grade 8 after a summer job with the MacMillan-Bloedel sawmill in Hudson Bay turned into full-time employment.

"I didn't get along too well in school, though I really liked sports. When I got into a fight with a teacher and was forbidden to take part in team sports, there was really nothing to keep me there, so I took the job."

When Pryor injured his back in 1978 while stacking and flipping plywood sheets, the former saw operator's life came to a crossroads.

"People can't be guaranteed they're going to have the same job all their life, so they need

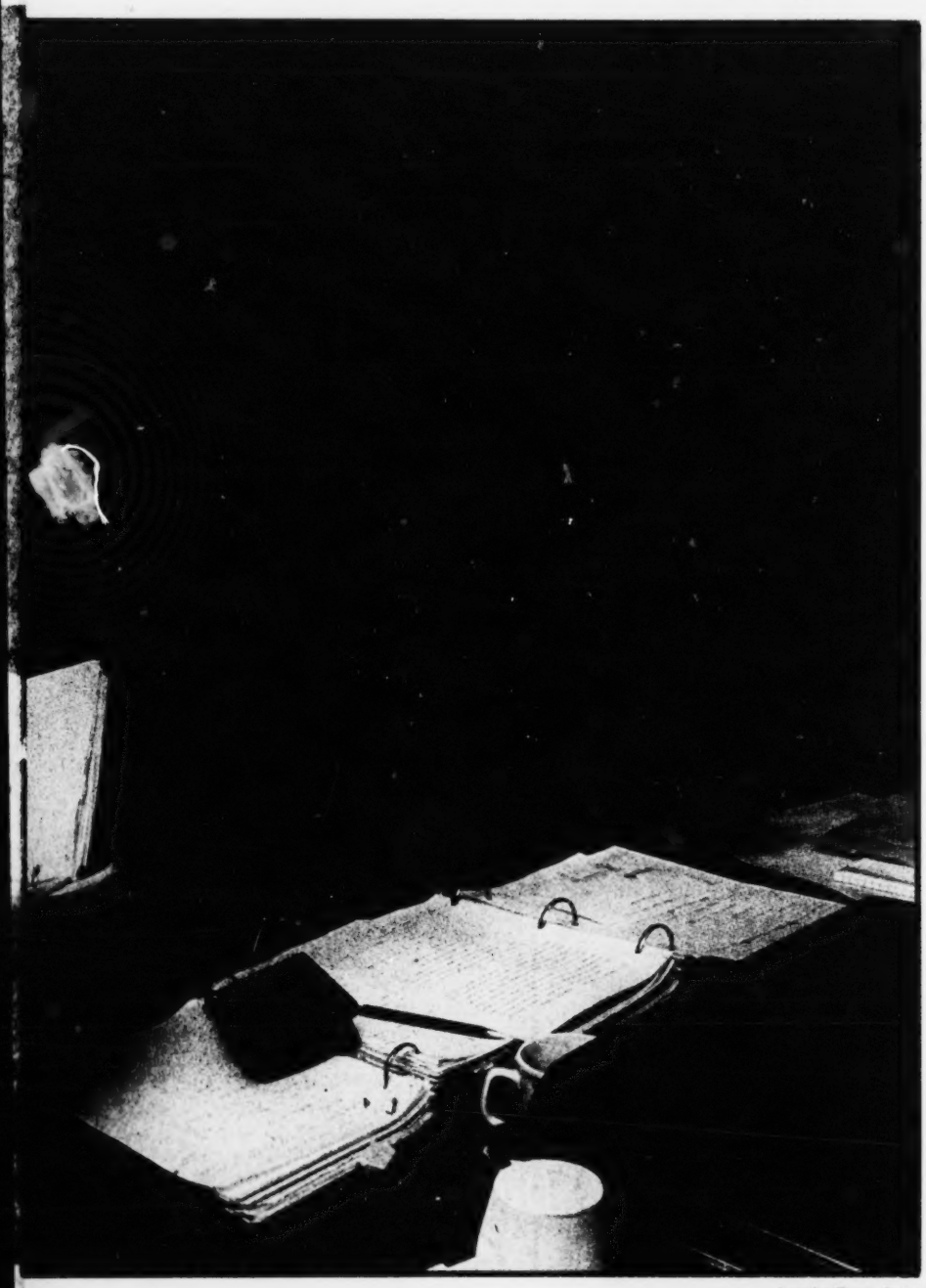


(From left) Ed Youdan, Thomas Ireland, John Molyneaux

laborers to complete school

the ability to switch jobs when the need comes up.'

— Joe Pryor



Leader-Post photo

and Joe Pryor at Regina Plains Community College

"Improving my education is real important if I want a new career," he says. "People can't be guaranteed they're going to have the same job all their life, so they need the ability to switch jobs when the need comes up."

When he finishes adult basic education, Pryor hopes to enrol in the telecommunications program at the technical institute in Saskatoon.

Molyneaux, 42, says he left school at 14 thinking he was going to make his fortune in the world. His first job was as a helper in the kitchen of a construction camp. "It was absolutely the worst job in the world," he says.

Molyneaux then tried his hand at a number of jobs, including commercial fishing and working on oil rigs.

But it was during a stint as a "part-time janitor and part-time social activist" with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labor that he fell down the stairs and injured himself. His whole attitude about life and careers changed.

Molyneaux says he thought he would be able to get by with what he describes as his "natural intelligence, love of books and an ability to learn from the school of life." But as he was recovering from his injuries, he realized he needed something more — a piece of paper saying he had the equivalent of a high school education.

It was this realization that caused him to enrol in adult basic education. He's now working on his mathematics skills so he can pass a test to get into a federal program that will train him to become a meteorological technician. "In other words, I want to be a weather recorder," he says.

Youdan, 41, was trained as a heavy-equipment mechanic at an engineering college in England.

He always thought this would be enough education to see him securely through life. That was until two years ago, when a truck on which Youdan was adjusting the brakes lurched forward and rolled over him, breaking one thigh and chipping a knee.

"It was devastating to lose your livelihood after 25 years," he says. "But now I hope to get back on track by picking up some of the courses I didn't get in England but are required if I want to get into a computer-aided drafting course at a technical institute."

"This time I'll get into a line of work where my injuries won't pose a problem."

— OLIJNYK

Auto worker has ambition to get off assembly line

James Mitchell (a pseudonym), an assembly line worker in his early 30s, commutes 50 kilometres twice a week to literacy classes run by the London Board of Education because there are none at his auto plant. Mitchell told the following story to Peter Calamai.

LONDON, Ont. — I've been at Ford 18 years and for the first eight years, it was a challenge to learn the job. It is a semi-skilled job and my goal was to reach the top of that skill. I think I've achieved that.

But I realized I was going nowhere fast and I had to evaluate myself fairly. I felt that I had speaking skills but there were no education skills. I never passed a grade in my life. I was always put up, goofed off, got out of school as soon as I could, at 15. I spent two years at an occupational class at high school and then out I went.

I've done very well; I own a nice home, two vehicles. I have a nice wife, two kids who are highly motivated.

I'm a highly motivated person, I like to achieve. And my hands are wearing out — 15 years on that line — it's time to use my brains. And in order to capitalize on it, I've got to learn to spell.

It was hard to sit down and realize that you can't write, that these skills are holding you back. That was very difficult. The next difficult thing was to do something about it. So you make a few phone calls, you find out what can be done and then . . . it's getting to the point where you had to humble yourself. I've been here a year now.

I got off work this morning at four o'clock. I got back up at quarter to eight to come to class and drove here from Aylmer. I'll go home now and I'll go to work at three o'clock and I'll work to twelve. It's not enough, it's not enough class time for me. By the time I get my Grade 12, it may be a five- to seven-year project, because of the limited amount of time I'm able to put into it, raising a family, working at a job.

So many people in our society do not reach out and grab their full potential. To do that takes motivation. It also takes a tremendous wife, tremendous kids; it also takes tremendous family, friends. As you go through life, everybody needs strokes. When you're illiterate, you take those strokes and you hang on to them as long as you can.

It's a cage, you live in a cage and once in a while you take risks and if you get slapped down, you go back in the cage and lock that real good and tight. I realize that and I take risks and I do get burned sometimes but I have to take these risks. Because every risk I take, if I succeed, it gives me confidence to go on to another.

There are opportunities out there that are just tremendous right now. Management is changing their ways of thinking. They're getting more people involved on the line with the process of building a car. If you have anything up there (pointing to his head), they'll give you an opportunity to utilize it. But along with that opportunity, you have to have some skills. Communication skills are the future, being able to talk to people, getting people to be productive.

Once I have these writing skills, I'll sit in a room and I'll listen to this guy talk, this guy, this guy and I'll pick up every one of his interesting points. I'll jot them all down and I'll go home and I'll roll them all over in my mind. I'll come back to the next meeting and I'll give them my opinion.

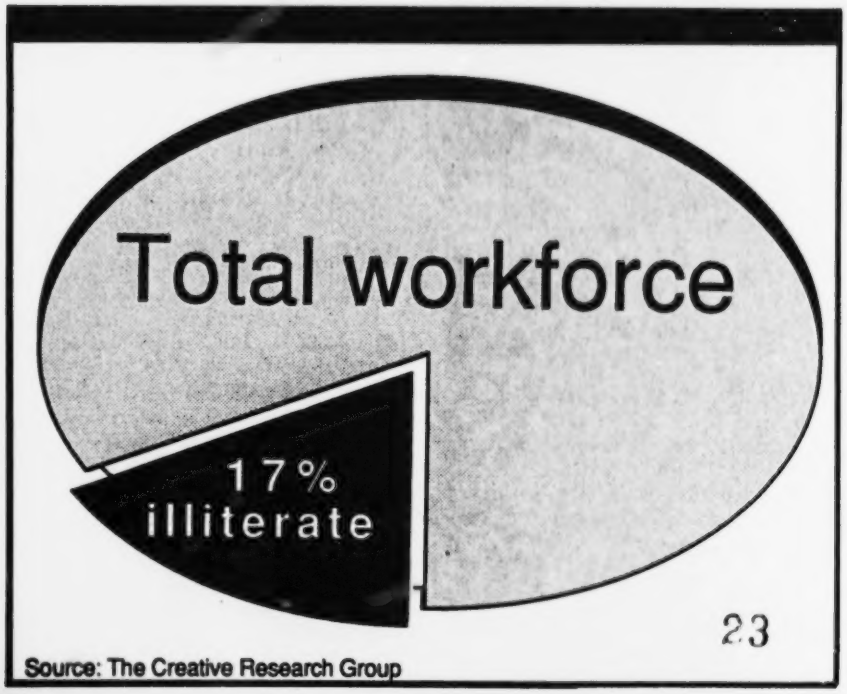
The only reason that I know that most of these guys I work with can't write — most of them can read — is that I know my own skills in trying to avoid that and I watch them do the same. And people with some schooling behind them can obviously see that too. It's getting to the point where we can't hide it anymore.

If Ford Motor Company said to me, "We've done a statistical study and we think that 60 per cent of the people out here are illiterate. You take your lunch hour and we'll give you another half-hour along with it to come in and get tutoring," I'd take advantage of that.

You know, it's a hell of a thing to expose yourself like that, it really is. I'm nervous doing it; it's a risk. But somebody has to talk for people who are in that situation. This is the type of guy I am . . . you give me the opportunity to get my Grade 12 behind me, I'll go out on the street and campaign for people who couldn't write, because I understand their problem.

All it takes is one person to stand up, it takes one person. First you have to provide for yourself and your family and then you can help people like that. All you've got to do is be honest, and say: Hey, I couldn't write four years ago.

You could do wonders for a lot of people.



Source: The Creative Research Group

Knowledge saves money

OTTAWA — Buried in 40 pages of mind-boggling statistical tables is the best evidence yet that literacy pays off for governments.

What other investment yields a 25-percent annual return to the nation's economy? Or repays the provincial government that's footing the bill within only 3½ years?

These encouraging estimates come from a study presented last winter of 24 adults with moderate to severe reading and writing problems who received one-to-one tutoring at the Remedial Reading Centre, a private school in Toronto that specializes in helping people with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Thirteen were on some form of government assistance, seven were working poor and four were being supported by their families. Two had brain damage, two were physically handicapped and the other 20 had learning disabilities, sometimes with additional physical problems.

Yet of the 23 who could be later traced, only two remained on unemployment insurance; 13 had jobs and the rest were full-time students aiming at specific jobs. Results are even better now, says the centre.

In effect, the study is a giant ledger, recording every cost and each benefit associated with these two dozen between 1979 and 1984.

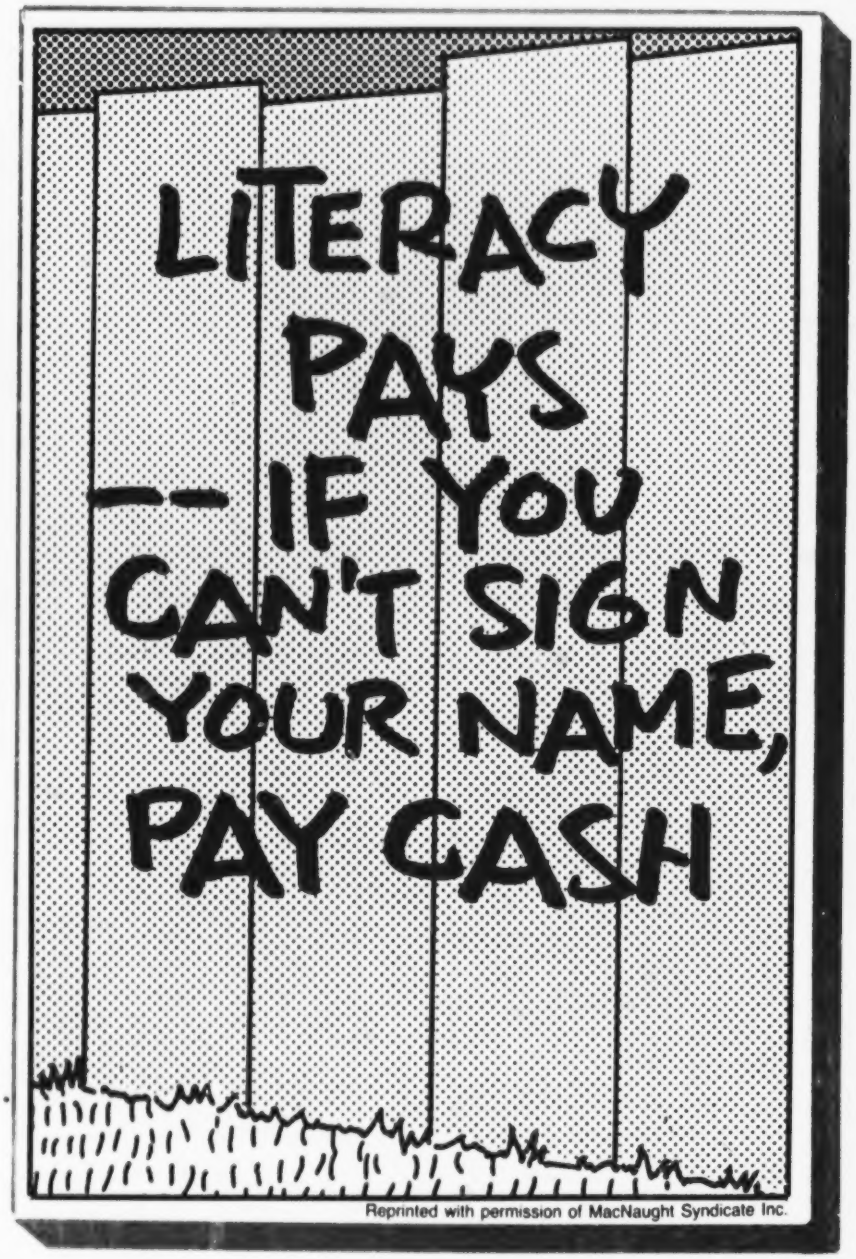
Take the case of Ken, a pseudonym for a junior welder who was drawing $5,600 a year in UI when he came to the centre in February 1979. A learning disability meant his reading skills were only sufficient to tackle material at the Grade 2-3 level.

It took 40 months of part-time and full-time tutoring before Ken left the centre reading at a Grade 9 level. The costs picked up by federal and provincial governments: $45,700. A further community college course cost an extra $700, for a total training bill of $46,400.

But by 1984, Ken was earning $13,000 working as a municipal employee, although still drawing $2,800 in unemployment, the only centre graduate doing so.

Even with that extra burden, the public investment was quickly recouped.

Ken's employment meant the national economy was paid back in just over two years. Increased personal income and sales taxes will pay the Ontario government back in only six years for its share of Ken's training costs. Over 10 years, the rate of return nationally on the $46,400 outlay was projected at 16 per cent.



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And Ken's case was worse than the average for the two dozen.

Joan, a housewife drawing $5,300 in family benefits, found work as a government clerk at $12,900 a year after 13 months at the centre raised her from a Grade 7 to intermediate high school level. The province recouped its total training costs within a year.

But this evidence wasn't impressive enough for Ontario's social services ministry. It stopped paying for young welfare recipients to go to the Remedial Reading Centre for 20 hours a week.

"The teaching does pay," insists centre director Abner Steinberg.

"If you put up $20,000 to provide literacy to someone and retrain him, it's a lot less expensive than pay $6,000 a year for the rest of his life."

Even $46,400 is a bargain. Ask Ken.

— CALAMAI

It's hard to get work

It's not easy finding work when you can't even read the job boards.

It's nerve-racking to have to face a potential employer who may reject you because you're illiterate.

And it's frustrating to be shut out of a job because you can't fill out a form.

Illiteracy continues to be a big problem for job-seekers in the province.

According to a federal study conducted in 1985, only about 35 per cent of adult Saskatchewan residents with less than a Grade 9 education — the standard of functional literacy — were employed. Of the remainder, about five per cent were actually unemployed and 60 per cent were either not in the labor force or were not looking for employment.

It's not that they're all unqualified. Many illiterate job-seekers don't find work because they don't know where to look, or because they can't fill out an application form.

Bonnie Swan, a special needs counsellor with the Canada Employment Centre, says she regularly sees evidence that illiteracy is a powerful barrier to employment.

"We have a number of clients who cannot read the job boards downstairs — they don't know how to read."

Employees at the centre will read job listings to these people, but Swan said they're often extremely reluctant to ask for help.

"They don't feel comfortable coming to us and saying they don't know how to read," she said.

"There's such a social stigma attached that even taking that first step is very dramatic."

Rather than admit they can't read, many illiterate job-seekers have developed elaborate schemes and routines to get hired, she said.

"They'll always keep a standard form folded up in their wallet, so they'll have the basic information. A lot of them will have resumes that are already done for them — so that it looks relatively good on paper. Some of them conveniently don't put their education on an application, which is appropriate in some cases — an employer may not notice it's missing."

The crunch comes when the employee is brought in for an interview, and to fill out additional forms in front of the employer.

"That's when the panic sets in. They try to get around that kind of circumstance by applying only at companies where they know they're not going to get another form shoved at them."

Even at the Canada Employment Centre, illiterate job-hunters find it painful to admit their problem, Swan said.

"We have a lot of people come in here who'll pretend that they read. They'll take a form downstairs and have a friend fill it out."

Swan said she's seen clients under extreme emotional distress as they try to talk about their illiteracy.

"I almost get overwhelmed at times because it's like they're confessing.

"I've had people cry at my desk in sheer frustration. The process of looking for a job invariably has required you to read."

But not always.

Ironically, while most illiterate job-hunters are terrified of being found out, many employers are not terribly concerned about the literacy level of their employees.

According to Sue Ceulmans, a service supervisor with Manpower Temporary Services, which employs about 500 people a year, as long as literacy isn't needed on the job, it often isn't important to the employer.

"I've never had a customer say he didn't want an employee because he can't read, although he might say something if he was lazy."

Many employers, especially those in the construction and manufacturing industries, are mainly concerned that their employees are punctual and work hard, Ceulmans said.

"You don't have to be literate to unload a boxcar of potato chips," she said.

Canada Employment's Swan agrees that there are many employers willing to give illiterate people a chance.

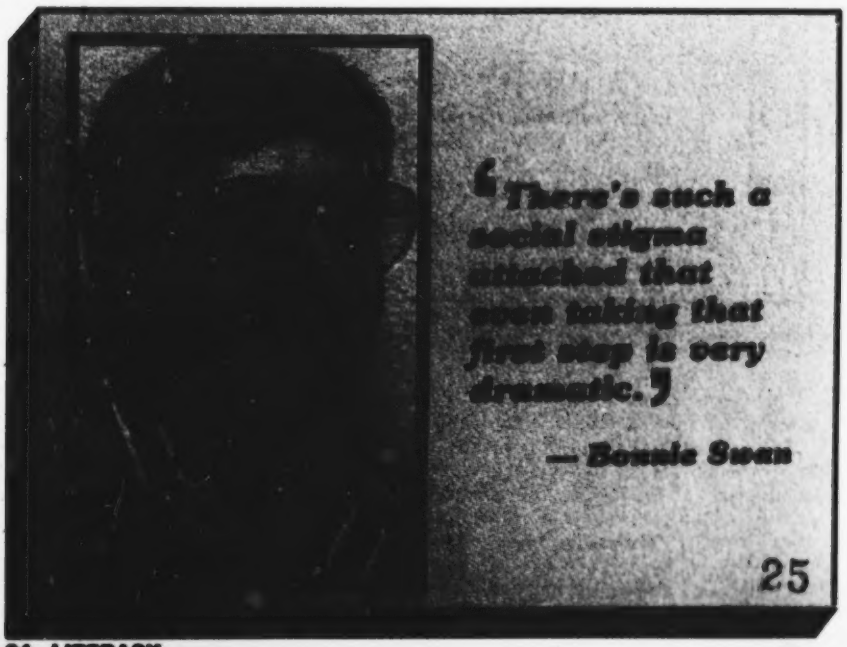
"I've found that the employers who've had a hard time themselves — whether because of substance abuse, or perhaps because they've been in trouble with the law, or because they haven't had such a good education — they seem to be somewhat more tolerant and sensitive."

On the other hand, many large companies, Crown corporations, and federal and provincial departments require employees to have a Grade 12 education — effectively shutting illiterate people out.

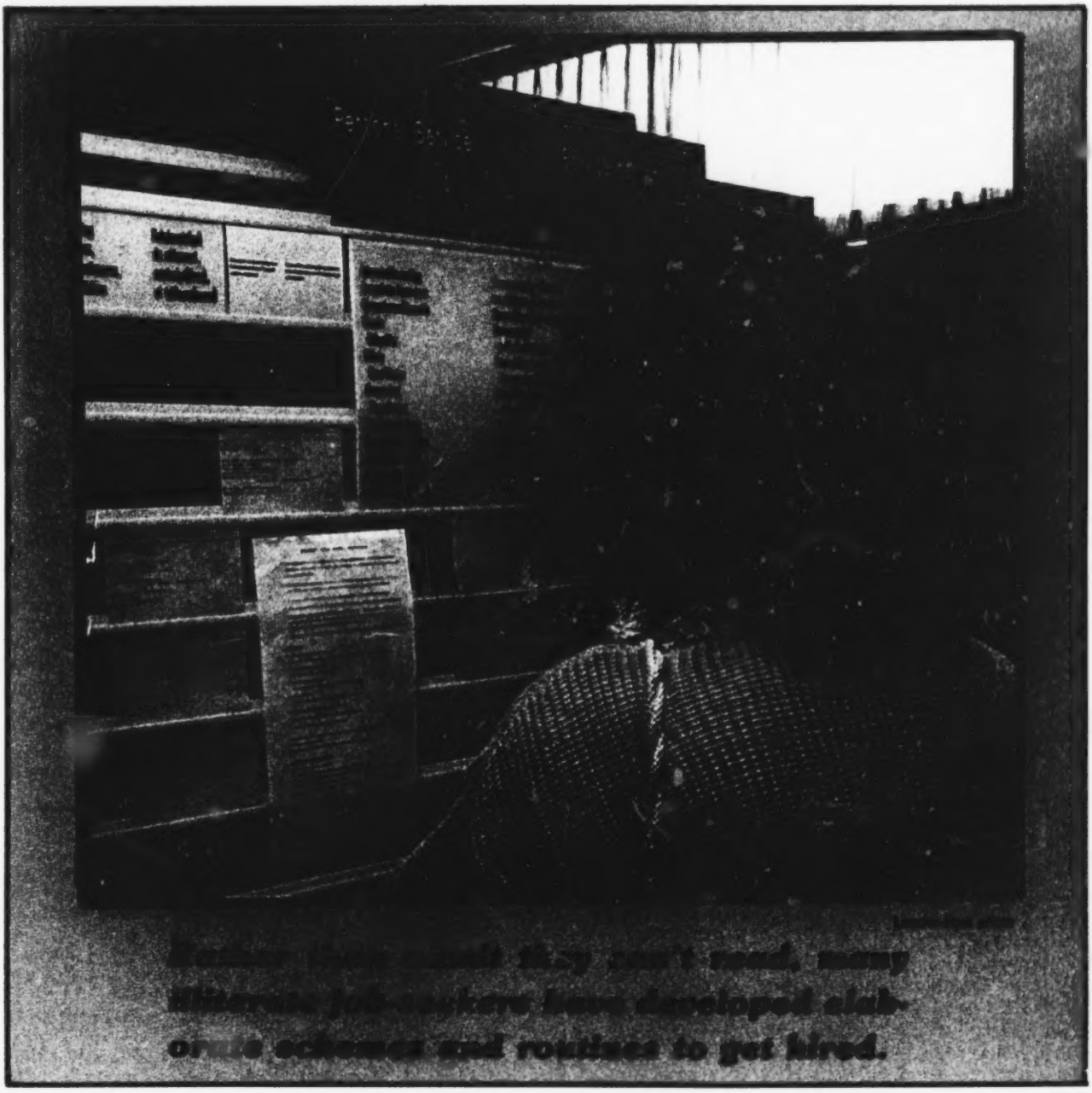
At SaskTel, one of the largest employers in the province, Grade 10 is required for manual labor jobs and Grade 12 for other positions. The corporation receives 10,000 to 12,000 applications annually for the approximately 300 positions that open up in a given year.

Although a Grade 10 or Grade 12 minimum may keep a potential flood of applications down to a manageable level, it can also be unfair to people who are otherwise capable of handling a job, Swan said.

"An employer which sets a Grade 12 limitation on their hiring levels is — in a way — practising some sort of discrimination. A lot of people, particularly na-



when you can't read



[illegible] they can't read, many illiterate job-seekers have developed elaborate schemes and routines to get hired.

tive people, do not have a Grade 12 education and can't apply."

In jobs where reading skills are required, of course, literacy level is crucial to employment.

Ceulmans said she has interviewed applicants looking for clerical work whose reading and writing skills were far below what they had received credit for.

"I don't want to knock the education system . . . but sometimes I shake my head and say, 'How did this person get out of Grade 12 with this level of grammar.' "

While clerical workers who can operate word processors are plentiful, a lack of strong English skills is the most common problem of temporary office workers, she said.

"In the three years I've worked here I haven't seen things get worse, but they haven't improved either."

One of the reasons for the poor level of basic skills, Ceulmans suggested, is that society finds it more acceptable today.

"Nobody is really ashamed about (their level of) literacy any more," she said.

— O'CONNOR

Most prisoners can't read

They've got drug problems, alcohol problems and attitude problems.

And most of them are illiterate.

They're inmates in Saskatchewan's jails.

According to the corrections division of Saskatchewan's justice department, anywhere from 50 to 60 per cent of the inmates at provincial correctional centres are at a reading level below Grade 9, functionally illiterate by Statistics Canada's definition.

There are also men and women serving time who are completely unable to read or write.

By one estimate, as many as 20 of the inmates at the Regina Correctional Centre are totally illiterate. Dave, an inmate at the centre who asked that his real name not be used, used to be one of them.

The 44-year-old from the Regina area, who gave up on school more than three decades ago, joined a literacy program shortly after beginning his 18-month sentence in May.

Dave could only read his name when he entered the jail.

But a literacy program run by Rev. Doug Bayliss, the chaplain of the centre, offered him a chance at things he'd always wanted to do: reading the Bible, newspapers and letters from home.

Of course, it's no simple task for an adult to learn to read under any circumstances, and being inside a jail doesn't make it any easier.

For many inmates, it's extremely difficult to admit to being illiterate — they're often ridiculed by their fellow prisoners when they do. So it was with Dave.

When word got out about his reading lessons, and others asked him what grade he was starting at, he told them kindergarten.

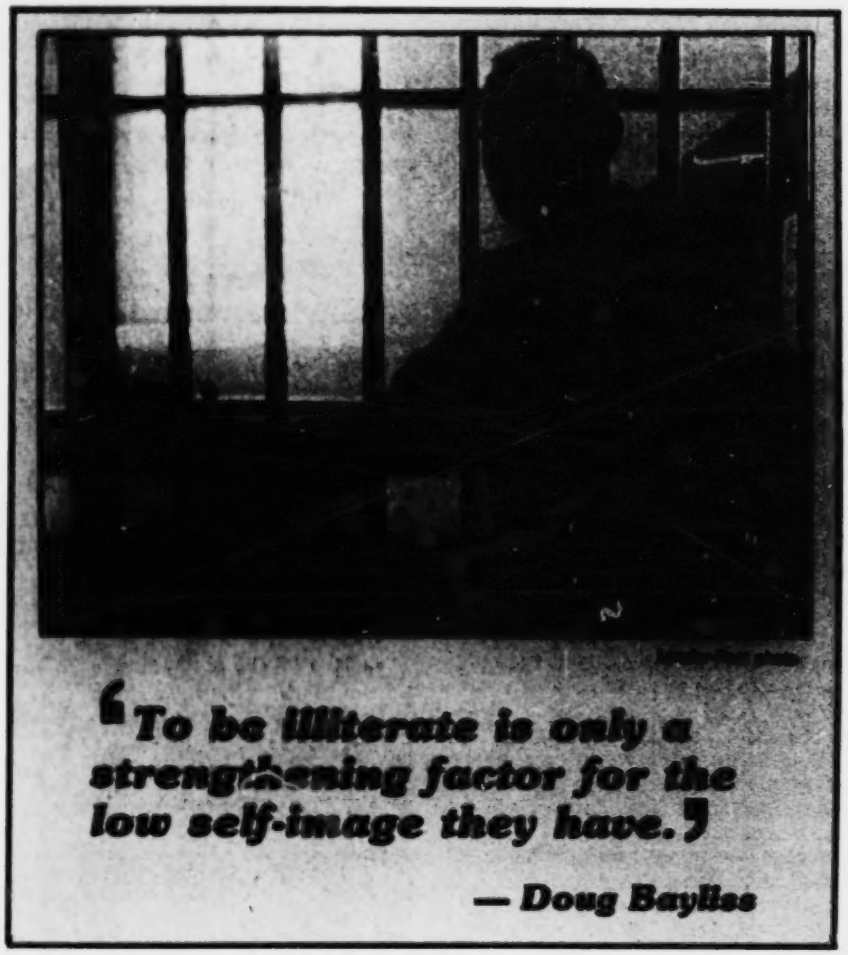
"They kind of laughed, but it didn't bother me. I don't care, they can tease me all they want," he said.

After a while, the reaction from other inmates died down, Dave said. "They don't hassle me any more," he said.

Since then, it hasn't been easy, but he says he's made steady progress in one-on-one counselling.

A first-time offender, Dave said that when he gets out, staying straight won't depend on whether he can read or write. He has always been able to hold down a job regardless of his education. "I'm not coming back. When I'm out that's it."

According to Bayliss, Dave is the only inmate enrolled in the program, although he estimates about four or five per cent of the 420 inmates at the centre can't read or write at all.



Participation rates in literacy programs are low for a number of reasons.

According to Bayliss, one of the most difficult barriers to teaching literacy is the attitudes of the inmates.

Apathy and irresponsibility are two of their primary characteristics, he said. Many in the centre have traditionally backed away from their problems.

"It's all part of the non-image. I'd say 80 to 85 per cent of the people here are, in their own minds, of no worth, rejects of society. To be illiterate is only a strengthening factor for the low self-image they have."

Even if more illiterate inmates participated in programs, there is a limit to what can be accomplished, Bayliss said, partly because of the time factor.

Most of the prisoners in provincial correctional centres are serving terms of less than two years and at Regina's facility the average stay is about six months. That's not long enough, at two lessons a week, to educate an inmate who can't read, Bayliss said.

"It's impossible to bring someone who's totally illiterate up to a Grade 9 reading level in five months."

Nor would a crash course be effective, he said.

"The attention span of these kids (the average age of inmates at the centre is about 23) is very limited. A day-to-day program would never work."

Even given short jail terms, many correctional centre officials believe an inmate can give himself a better shot at a job upon release by improving his reading and writing skills.

According to the centre's education supervisor, Bryan Clark, anything that helps an ex-inmate find work will probably help keep him out of the centre.

"If a guy has a job, he's more likely to stay out of trouble," he said.

or write

As to whether literacy itself will help keep an offender from coming back, Clark is not as certain.

"It'll be a help but it's not going to be a cure-all."

So far, the provincial correctional system has not attacked the illiteracy problem in its jails as the federal government has in its prisons.

Solicitor General James Kelleher announced in March that the Correctional Service of Canada would launch a major campaign to attack illiteracy in federal penitentiaries. Federal prison officials hope to bring 600 more inmates to functional literacy in 1987-88 than the previous year.

The provincial jails in North Battleford, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina have all developed separate programs to teach inmates to read and write, but there's no overall literacy policy guiding them.

Over the years various approaches have been tried, dropped and revived at the centres, depending on the availability of money, volunteers and ideas.

In Prince Albert, for example, where there is both a men's and a women's correctional centre, literacy instructors began training inmates in 1980 to teach reading and writing to other inmates.

Bess Gilkinson, a volunteer literacy program co-ordinator with the Prince Albert Regional Community College, said the program was a modest success, although she believes using inmates as tutors is not the best approach.

"There's a fair deal of mistrust. Some don't want their peers to know they can't read."

Gilkinson said she's not surprised the participation rate of inmates in literacy programs is low.

"It takes a heck of a lot of courage to come forward. Is there any other circumstance in the world where you'd be subjected to ridicule and still be expected to succeed?" she said.

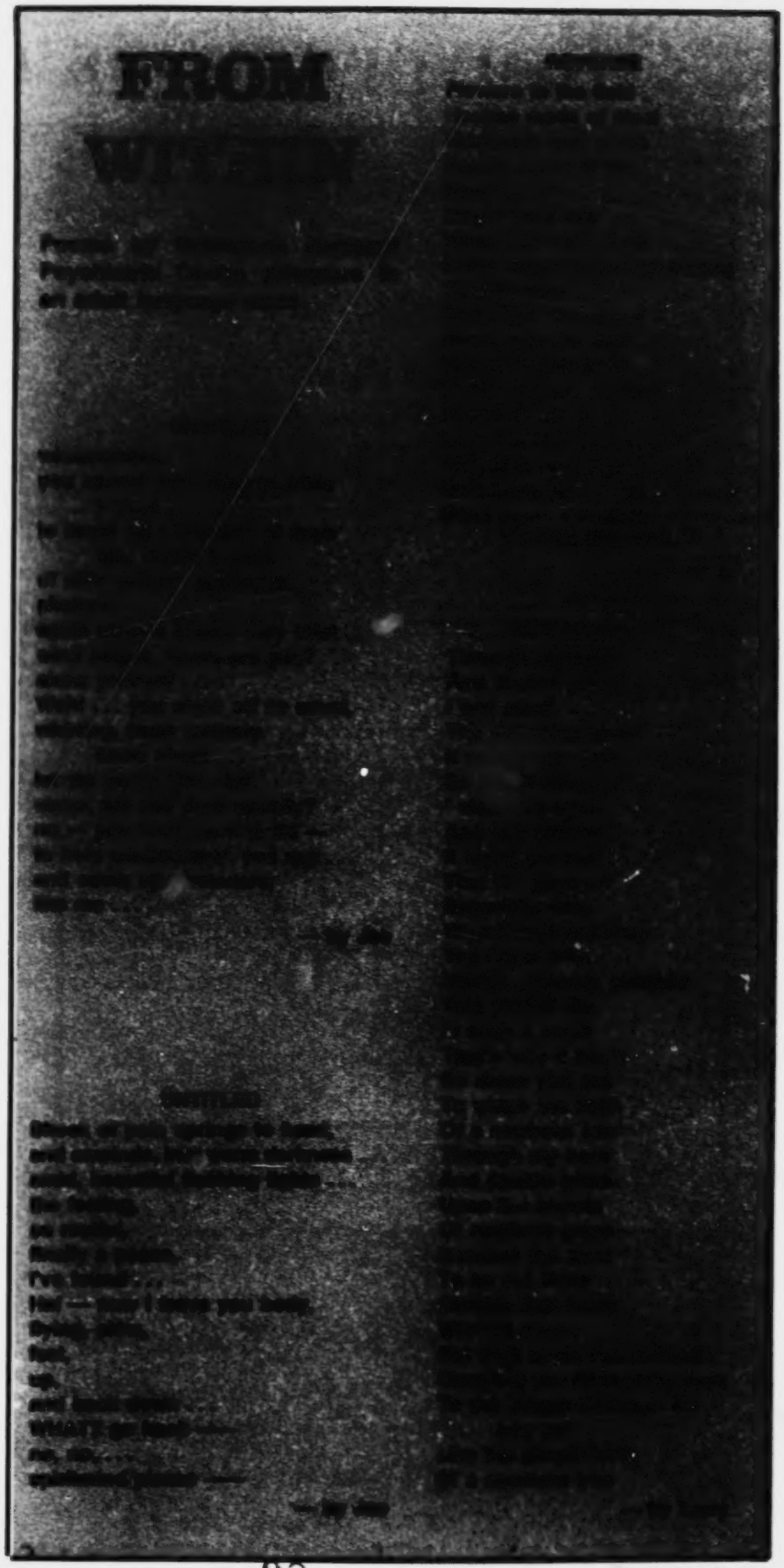
"A lot of these people have experienced failure, so it's not surprising. Why on earth would you want to sit in a classroom when you've always failed there before?"

But with a little sensitivity toward the inmates' needs, literacy programs can work, she said. Although most inmates at correctional centres are serving short sentences, that's no excuse not to put literacy programs in place.

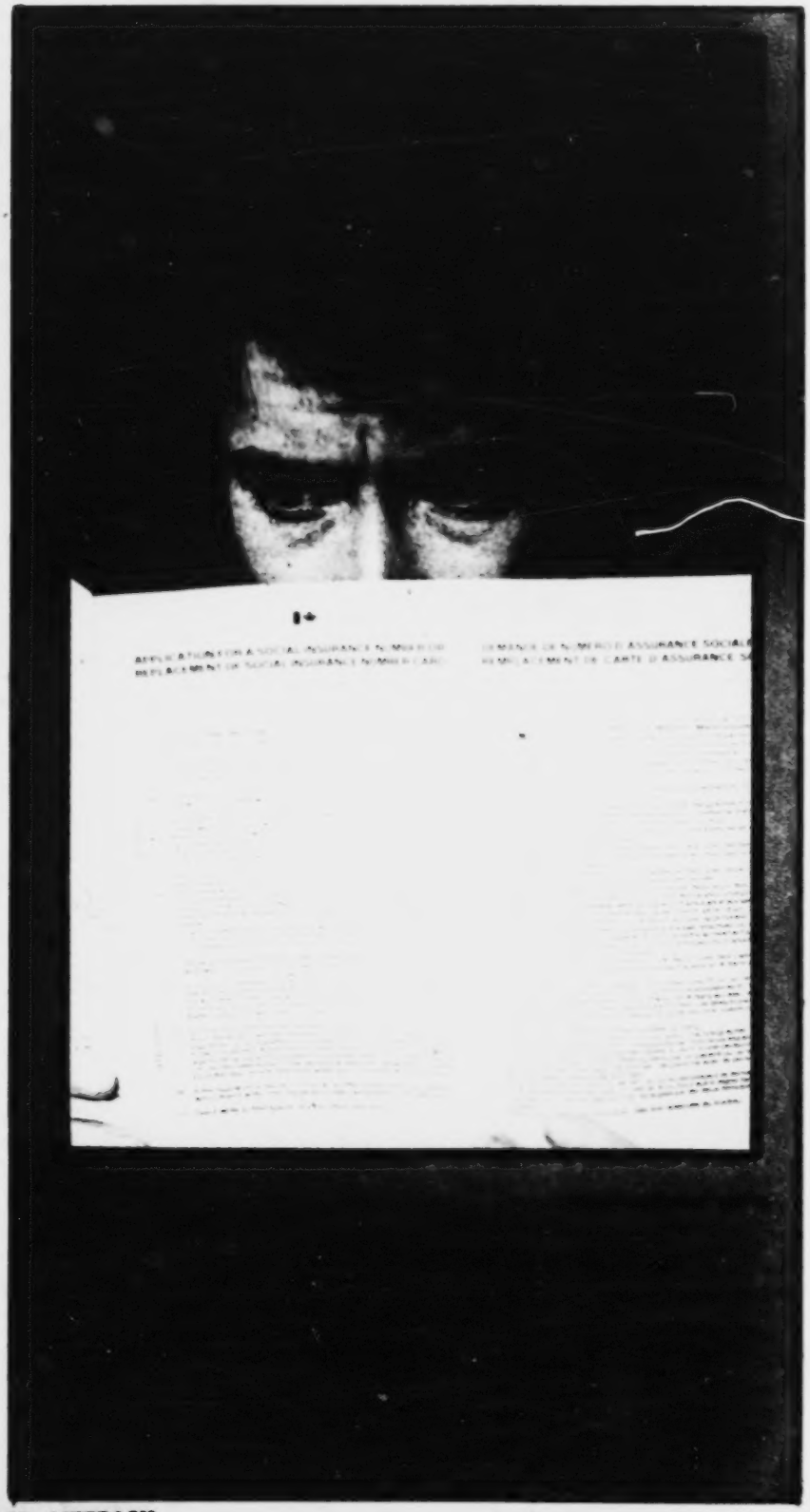
"I don't think we have the right to say there's no time," she said.

"Basic literacy is an absolute right. And there's no question we can accomplish things."

— O'CONNOR



Governments don't help



OTTAWA — Most government publications can't be easily read or understood by the average Canadian, concludes a survey carried out for Southam News.

The result, say literacy experts, is that many Canadians aren't warned about dangers such as workplace hazards and can't benefit from government programs that they're entitled to.

York University education professor Gary Bunch tested more than 30 publications for "readability" using two standard formulas. The publications were selected at random from pamphlets and booklets issued to the public by Ontario, B.C., Newfoundland and the federal government.

Nearly half of the material required university-level education to read, although two-thirds of Canadian adults never got beyond high school. A mere four publications rated as readable by someone with only Grade 8 education — the level of 3.7 million adults.

The results indicate little change, since a 1970 task force condemned the "sheer unintelligibility" of most federal publications. Official surveys in the late '70s and '80s also gave a failing grade to provincial health and safety publications.

"It's not maliciousness; it's ignorance," says Bunch.

"I'd guess that the people who write these don't even talk to a factory worker or someone who hasn't had a solid basic education."

While some experts criticize the readability formula as misleading, Bunch's findings are supported by the exclusive Southam Literacy Survey of 2,398 Canadian adults. One-quarter said they need help reading publications from governments and business and four out of 10 functional illiterates volunteered they had difficulty.

Even among fully literate Canadians, more than one in five reported needing help with such written materials.

Income tax tables are the toughest. Seven out of 10 Canadians couldn't use the tax chart to pick the right amount of federal taxes to pay on taxable income of $13,990.

Little has been done in Canada to make government materials more readable — a sharp contrast to other Western nations. The federal government has focused on research rather than reform.

For five years, the Legal Services Society in Vancouver has produced citizen's guides to the law that are easily read. But both the guides and the ap-

(they dispense assistance)

proach have been slow to catch on in Canada.

"It's a huge fight to try to get some people to understand that the world isn't filled with print junkies all with PhDs," says Carol Pfeifer, the society's director of public legal education.

A survey of how small claims courts are explained showed improvement in the readability of pamphlets, says Pfeifer. But too often the material was written from the viewpoint of the legal system rather than for the person who needed the information.

"The people who most often need the advice often can't understand the publications," agrees Bill Shallow, a Newfoundland government expert in adult education.

As U.S. President Jimmy Carter said in 1978, when he ordered American government regulations written in Plain English: "The federal government has become like a foreign country, complete with its own interests and its own language."

These judgments are borne out by the York University survey that found many essential pieces of information are written well over the heads of the intended audience.

A federal pamphlet on how to apply for a Social Insurance Number, for instance, rated at a senior high school or university reading level. So did five pamphlets by the B.C. ministry of human resources explaining benefits and rights.

By contrast, the Ontario ministry of justice tried to explain divorce and separation to children by writing at the Grade 8 or 9 level and another Ontario pamphlet aimed at babysitters managed Grade 7 prose.

"A lot of care was taken with the writing of these. You can see the difference," says Bunch.

The York professor used two formulas, named after their inventors Fry and Dale-Chall, to determine a range for the reading level. The formulas look at such things as sentence length, numbers of syllables per word and the familiarity of words. Short sentences and short words always score best.

Worst among the publications was the federal government's free trade promotion kit, a glossy collection of fact and fiction that flooded supermarkets in May as part of a $12-million advertising campaign.

By checking random 100-word blocks, Bunch rated the main booklet, "Securing Canada's Future," and four other inserts from the 200,000 kits. All came out at between second- and fourth-year university level.

"It's as if they weren't talking to the ordinary people, but only to the uppermost slice — politicians, business leaders and editors."

Yet the federal government once knew how to write for ordinary Canadians about an urgent national issue.

In 1931, a 30-page pamphlet from the Department of Pensions and National Health tried to calm fears about a terrible disease called Infantile Paralysis, later known as polio. It managed this technical subject with prose no higher than a Grade 7 reading level.

"If they could do it 50 years ago, you'd think there would be more of it today. Anything important can be written so that people with only basic information can understand it. Once they managed with simplicity and grace. Now they

have to dazzle us with their complexity," complains Bunch.

The reading barriers created by big words, jargon and wandering sentences aren't limited to government publications. Other surveys have found most trade union newspapers are too difficult for their intended readers, staff manuals baffle retail workers and even materials for adult literacy students lack consistency.

And newspapers, popular magazines and school textbooks are constantly being surveyed to see if they're shooting wide of their readers.

The whole mess is further complicated by continuing controversy over the readability formulas themselves. Supporters concede that the formulas don't distinguish between sense and nonsense, take no account of graphics or typography and can't know whether the intended audience has special knowledge.

"I might have a motorcycle repair manual which tests out as first-year university level. Yet if I gave it to someone who reads at the Grade 9 level but also happens to maintain his own motorcycle, he'd manage with no problems," says Andrew Manning, an education professor at Halifax's Mount Saint Vincent University.

In 1980 under a federal Justice Department contract, Manning did the most comprehensive readability survey yet in Canada — 300,000 words, three formulas and 59 documents from the federal government, eight provincial governments and the Reader's Digest.

All the documents attempted to explain some aspect of the law to the public. Manning's conclusion: only a half-dozen would be useful to the people who most needed the information.

"It's not malice; it's egocentric writing by lawyers who never consider who the intended audience is."

One U.S. expert isn't so positive that poor readability is an accident.

Michael Fox, director of a Washington, D.C., literacy group, says the dense prose of many official forms is one way of making sure that too many people don't apply for benefits.

"It's OK to rewrite computer manuals, it's OK to have a Plain English law for well-off people to understand their mortgages, but when I want the food stamp applications written more simply, I'm accused of wanting to 'dummy down' things," says Fox.

Mostly, when governments do try, the attempts appear half-hearted.

Ruth Baldwin, a Plain English consultant based in Ottawa, advised a group of federal officials who prepare sheets inserted with family allowance cheques. It took six months to reduce a change-of-address form from two pages to one, says Baldwin.

"I don't think those people were really convinced about what they were doing; they haven't had us back," she says.

They should. The readability survey rated three family allowance inserts at Grade 10 to 12 reading levels, higher than the education of at least five million Canadians.

— CALAMAI

EDITOR'S NOTE: York University's Gary Bunch was asked to rate this article by Peter Calamai. Using the Fry and Dale-Chall standards, this story was scored at a university level or, at the most lenient, between Grade 11 and Grade 12.

Retired accountant tries to

OTTAWA — Cy Whiteley's pen scuttles furiously down the government form, slashing legalisms and turning gobbledegook into plain English.

"Affix your signature," Whiteley mutters. "Why not just, 'sign.' "

"Do you have any absences from Canada?" he reads. "An ordinary person would ask, 'Have you been away from Canada,' but not these pseudo-lawyers."

By now Whiteley is in full fury; his unrelenting pen decorates the once-neat page with accusing arrows, blackened blocks and caustic comments. The revised document is sent back to the federal government agency that inflicted it on the public.

Another blow for official prose that can be easily understood.

Britain has Plain English overseers in the prime minister's office, Australia a special cabinet adviser on Plain English and the United States a federal Plain English regulation signed 10 years ago by Jimmy Carter.

Canada has a 76-year-old retired accountant with aching legs whose hobbies used to be brisk walks and writing letters to the editor under seven pseudonyms (six male, one female).

> ***"I've been niggling at people for years. It's a thing you grow up with."***
>
> ***— Cy Whiteley***

But the sole remaining newspaper in Ottawa won't print his thunderbolts and various ailments have given a rest to the pedometer on Whiteley's belt. Instead, Yoda-like, he instructs novices from an anonymous corridor of empty government offices just a few blocks from the Parliament Buildings.

"I've been niggling at people for years," he grins. "It's a thing you grow up with."

Some niggling. Single-handedly over the past 20 months, Cy Whiteley and his scuttling pen have revised 1,100 forms and leaflets from 39 departments and agencies.

"He's a dedicated critic and his comments were very valuable," says Dale Colter of the federal customs service.

Those valuable comments — or at least half of them — account for scores of pending changes to I Declare, the million-copies-a-year customs brochure telling Canadians what they can legally bring home from trips outside the country.

Whiteley's work is a project of the Law Reform Commission, which hopes to expand to French-language forms as well. It started almost as a fluke when the retired accountant was hired to fill a temporary financial vacancy and a commissioner discovered Whiteley's private crusade for plain language.

"The greatest number of all Canadians should be able to understand, with minimal help, all government forms and instructions," Whiteley explains.

Uncredited improvements from the plain language project are already in citizenship forms from the Secretary of State and creeping into documents from a half-dozen other agencies as existing supplies are used up.

"They can't grasp that it would save money to chuck out a few hundred pounds of old forms and print new ones right away that save the public's time and government expense as well. That's why it's slow starting."

Experience elsewhere shows the value of plain language in government forms. By revising the application forms for legal aid, one British agency cut $2.5 million a year from staff costs of dealing with faulty applications. The U.S. Federal Communications Commission rewrote the regulations for citizens band radio into plain language . . . and was able to reassign five officials who had done nothing but answer questions about the previous legalese.

MPs are also in favor. A Commons committee last year urged immediate and drastic simplification of income tax forms, which six million Canadians pay others to fill out for them.

"Look at this," says Whiteley, retrieving an Australian income tax form writ-

Readability of government publications

Document	Years of school required to read
Federal	
1931 polio pamphlet	5-7
1987 free trade publicity kit	13-17
How to look for a job	5-6
How to apply for Social Insurance Number	13-17+
National Defence recruiting pamphlet	13-17+
Family Allowance inserts	10-12
British Columbia	
Information on workers' rights, benefits	13-15
Newfoundland	
Nutrition and farm pamphlets	13-15
Ontario	
Workers' Compensation Board guide	16-17+
Legal advice for layman	7-9
Senior citizen's guide	11-12
Babysitters' pamphlet	7-8
Drug abuse information	9-10

Source: Prof. Gary Bunch, York University — Southern Graphics: Rob Ludlow

clarify government wording

APPLICATION FOR A SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER OR REPLACEMENT OF SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER CARD

PLEASE DETACH THIS INSTRUCTION SHEET FROM THE APPLICATION FORM BEFORE COMPLETION. READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY AND FOLLOW THEM AS YOU COMPLETE THE FORM.

1. Print your first name and your present family name (surname) in full. Don't print *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss* or any other designation. Print your middle name only if you wish to have it on your SIN card.
2. Print the day, month and year of your birth.
3. Indicate by an X if you're a male or female and, if you're a twin, please check the appropriate block.
4. This means your mother's last or family name at her birth. If you don't know it, print *unknown*.
5. Print your father's full (given) name. This information helps us to distinguish you from other applicants who have the same name. Print *unknown* if you don't know his name.
6. Print the name of the city, town or village where you were born and give the province or foreign country.
7. If your family name now is different from your family name at birth (because of marriage, for example), print your family name at birth.
8. If you have used family names other than those in (1) and (7), print the other family names.
9. Read Block 9 carefully. If you've ever received Unemployment Insurance benefits or completed an income tax return, you probably have a Social Insurance Number. It's an offence to knowingly apply for more than one Social Insurance Number. Put an *X* in the appropriate block.
10. If you already have a Social Insurance Number, print your number in full and include the current fee. Any Canada Employment Centre or Canada Immigration Centre can tell you the correct amount.
11. Show your marital status by putting an *X* in one of the blocks. A widow, widower or divorced person would put an *X* in the "Other" block.
12. If you're a Canadian citizen, status indian or a permanent resident (landed immigrant) put an *X* in the appropriate block. Otherwise put an *X* in the "Other" block.
13. Print your area code and telephone number. It can help us give you better service if we have to contact you.
14. Print your current mailing address in full.
15. Your application will be rejected if this block contains a typewritten signature. Your signature must reflect the name in which you wish to be registered. Applications made for a person under 12 years of age must be signed by a parent or guardian, who must state in block 16, his/her relationship to the person for whom the application is made. Print the day, month and year when you complete this application.
16. If the signature in block 15 is an *X* or other mark made by a person who cannot write, the signature of two witnesses must appear.
17. Don't write in this space. It's for office use only.

IMPORTANT

Your application will be rejected if not accompanied by a **PRIMARY** document and a **SECONDARY** or **SUPPORTING** document. Refer to the brochure "HOW TO APPLY FOR A SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER (SIN)", for these documents.

FINAL CHECK

Have you completed the application in full?
Have you signed the application with a written (not typed) signature?

Do you have the two required documents:

- **PRIMARY DOCUMENT** (original or true certified copy) and
- **SECONDARY DOCUMENT** (a photocopy is acceptable), or
- **SUPPORTING DOCUMENT**, if required (an original or true certified copy).

(Please refer to the brochure *HOW TO APPLY FOR A SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER (SIN)*, for these documents.)

FEE: Submit the current fee for a replacement card only, in one of the following forms payable to the RECEIVER GENERAL FOR CANADA:

- Money order (postal, bank, C.N., C.P.)
- Personal cheque
- Bank draft
- Cash, if presented personally.

DO NOT MAIL CASH.

We encourage you to take your application and documents to the nearest Canada Employment Centre. Your application will be certified and your documents will be returned to you immediately. If this is inconvenient, you may mail your application and documents to:

Social Insurance Registration
Central Index
P.O. Box 7000
Bathurst, N.B.
E2A 4T1

Since we are not responsible for documents sent through the mail, we suggest that you mail your application and documents by *Registered Mail*. If you want your documents returned by *Registered Mail*, put the necessary postage on your return envelope. Otherwise, your documents will be returned to you by First Class Mail.

Even if you can understand all these instructions, you still aren't told what a primary document, secondary document and supporting document are. But don't worry — another pamphlet will tell you.

ten in Plain English. "They've even made the type large enough for old people like me to read."

Small type is one target of Whiteley's avenging pen. Another is document writers who forget the large proportion of immigrants and semi-literates in the general public. The "dedicated critic" even revises forms while waiting at the bank or reading fire notices in his apartment building.

But some Canadian government officials aren't convinced of the need for plain language. One agency said it might consider improving the illegible type in a notice — when existing supplies are used up in 10 years.

Whiteley won't identify other foot-draggers, but many who apply for a passport are puzzled by the form's convoluted phrases and jargon.

And there's always the post office, dependably backward in its customs sticker which demands a full description of contents and then intones: "Non-observance of this condition may lead to a delay of the item."

The U.S. postal service, governed by the same international regulations, manages with: "Failure to do so might delay your article."

— CALAMAI

Shoe repairman was 31

When Ed Dorcas started school in a one-room schoolhouse, reading, writing and arithmetic were taught to the tune of a yardstick wielded by an abusive teacher.

"I can remember the first few days of school were rough on me because I was lefthanded," he said. "My teacher hated a left-handed student with a passion. I remember I had my yellow pencil broken and the broken piece shoved in my right hand because I was using my left hand.

"It went on and I think right from day one I hated school. And I just said I wasn't going to learn and that was it."

He never did learn to read or write at school. The crack of a yardstick broken over his head ended his early enthusiasm for the classroom and he dropped out in Grade 6.

But years later, he wanted to try again. At age 31, he went to Regina Plains Community College where he finally learned to read.

"By that time, I wanted that part of life that I didn't have," said Dorcas, now 42. "After I learned how to read, the whole world was a different place, absolutely different."

About one million Canadians can't read or write. Aided by sympathetic friends, family and sometimes a pocketful of ingenious tricks, they survive in a world they can't always understand.

Dorcas got by on manual skills and sheer nerve. "The most I was ever unemployed was 15 or 20 minutes," he said in an interview at his Regina home.

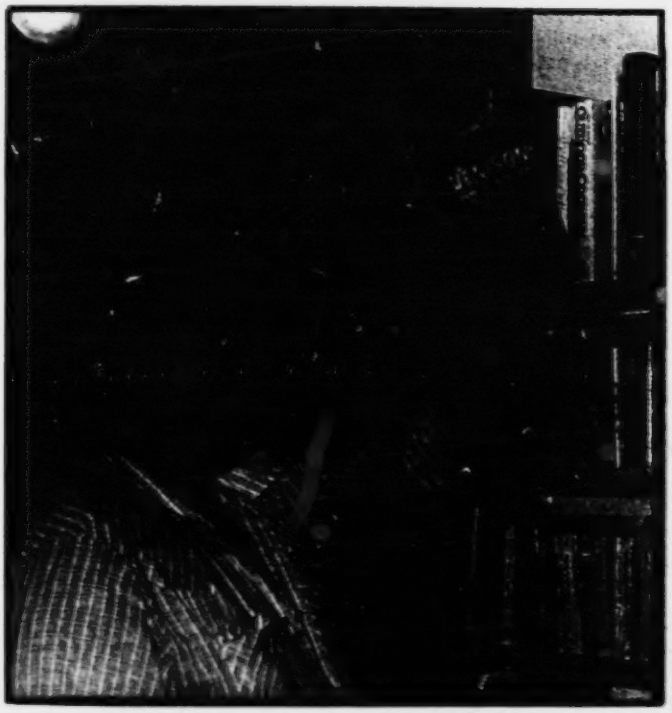
"Whenever I filled out a job application, I got the secretary to fill out the work resume. When she asked what education I had, I was a smart bugger; I said half of Grade 12. Because I had Grade 6, I said half of Grade 12," he said, laughing uproariously.

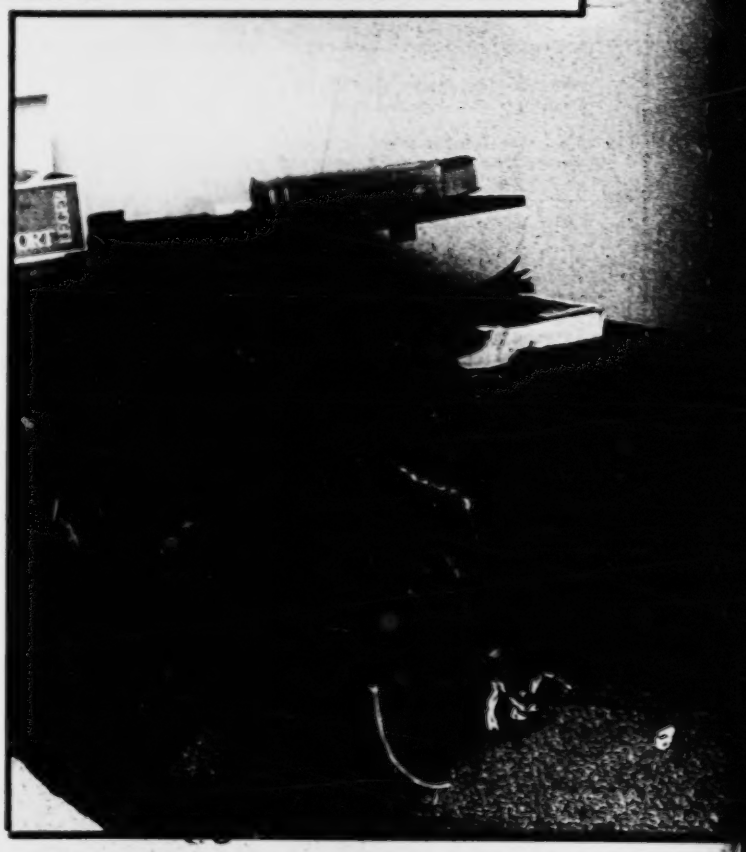
There were plenty of jobs. Dorcas worked on farms, oil fields and drilling rigs. At different times he was a welder, a truck driver who crisscrossed North America and a construction boss in charge of men older and better-educated than himself. Today, he owns a shoe repair shop in Regina.

"I got a lot of jobs that way, jobs that I shouldn't have got. But this is the way you hide it, the fact you can't read or write. Who's going to throw something at you and ask you to read?"

An excellent memory and a knack for reading blueprints opened many doors. "It just came natural to me, nobody ever taught me anything about it," he said of the blueprint reading. Nobody asked him if he could read anything else.

"Lots of people couldn't read," he said. "Farmers would think nothing of hiring someone who couldn't. As long as he could work with his hands, that was all that was necessary."





before he started to read

"Nothing is going to hurt you. They're going to give you the part of your life that you're missing."

— Ed Dorcas

Props also helped. On trucking runs, Dorcas carried a piece of paper with his destination written on it so he could match the letters to the road sign. Still, he never made a costly mistake and his career boomed, he said.

Getting back to books happened almost by accident. A doctor got him involved, said Dorcas. "I said I was illiterate. He said, 'You've worked 16 years, had beautiful jobs, made good money. You mean you can't read or write?' I said no. So he pushed a book at me and I said I couldn't read it."

The doctor convinced him that he could learn. So in the spring of 1976, Dorcas enrolled in Regina Plains Community College, now part of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. He was told he had the reading ability of someone in the first three to four weeks of Grade One.

"I was scared like hell of not learning anything and wasting my time," he said. "I didn't want to waste my time or the (former Department of Manpower and Immigration's) time; they were paying for it and I didn't want to let them down."

But he enjoyed school this time. "I guess I was ready to learn how to read and I wanted it bad enough," he said. Working with cassette tapes, workbooks and a gifted teacher, he finished Grade 4 and started the Grades 5-10 program.

The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology still offers adult literacy classes. Anyone over the age of 18 can attend day or night classes full time and work at their own speed.

Grades 0-4, 5-10 and 11-12 are offered from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. two nights a week. Grades 5-10 and 11-12 are offered five days a week from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Cost is $40 a month and classes begin in September and end in June.

Students are placed by academic level, determined during a free test held every Wednesday by appointment.

Dorcas quit before finishing Grade 10 — he said he ran out of time — but he had learned to read at a Grade 6 level, well enough to read a newspaper. Soon, he was picking up pocket novels and Hardy Boys detective books.

It opened up a new world. "You can't always ask someone what happened at Fort Walsh in the 1880s," he said, waving a pamphlet about the historic site.

He used to drive past monuments and other historic markers because he couldn't read the inscriptions. "Now I stop to read them and enjoy it," he said.

He also encourages others to read and has advice for non-readers who are afraid to learn.

"Nothing is going to hurt you," he said. "They're going to give you the part of your life that you're missing."

— SPENCER

Parkland College dedicated to improving Saskatchewan's lot

If the numbers don't fib, the rolling parkland, vast grasslands and northern forests of rural Saskatchewan are home to some of the least educated Canadians when it comes to the basics of reading and writing.

All of which is reason for finger-pointing — if that's your pleasure — at teachers for letting it happen, at politicians who cut back money for adult education or at the multitude of social pressures that force students to take a quick exit from the halls of learning.

But at the other end of the problem is a small group with some solutions, a tiny army tackling an ever-growing problem.

Perhaps nowhere is literacy training more advanced than in the east-central district served by the Parkland Regional College. About 80 students — half of them learning English as a second language — are enrolled in a learn-to-read program offered throughout the Yorkton-Melville area.

Two words describe Parkland's program — anonymous and flexible.

Many students desperately want to read. But as victims of society's misconception that illiteracy is some sort of mental deficiency, they are ashamed to come forward for help, Deb Purdin, program co-ordinator, said.

"Many times they'll shy away from literacy training if it is held in a very large classroom. Often, if a student is from a very small town, he will ask if he might drive out to a larger centre because he doesn't want to be matched with a tutor he might know personally."

Tutors are trained to respect the student's privacy. Much like the relationship between a doctor and patient, the one-on-one instruction between a tutor and a client is kept as nobody's business but their own.

Confidentiality is relatively easy to maintain, given the flexibility of the program. Instruction typically takes place in the home at a time convenient to both the student and tutor.

Unlike school, there are no rigid standards or grades. A student decides how well he wants to read and the tutor designs the program accordingly. While one student and tutor have been working together since the start of the program in 1978, others achieve the reading level they desire in a year or two or even a few months, Purden said.

"We let the client or student set their own goals. Sometimes those goals are very immediate, such as getting a driver's licence. Others might take longer to attain. For instance, a woman whose children have left home might want to be able to correspond with them."

Tutors are the key. All are volunteers, receiving no remuneration for their work, except some mileage compensation and expenses for their day of training.

Still, Purdin is able to maintain a roster of about 100-110 tutors.

"We're always looking for more volunteers. It always seems we have enough to get by and then more clients will come on."

There are other limits to the program. When first established, the office of the literacy co-ordinator was a full-time job. But when a money squeeze hit community colleges, it was eventually reduced to 15 hours a week — too little time to fully monitor the course and train volunteers, Purdin said.

One improvement to the program would be an injection of money for the college to buy more of the proper teaching materials now available for adult literacy training, she said.

Despite all, the volunteers carry on, working the occasional mini-miracle and always aware that the goal of a fully literate society is an ambitious one.

"I think we're reaching a very small number who need help," Purdin said. "But until there is more public awareness of illiteracy and it doesn't have the negative connotation it does now, that's not about to change."

— PETRIE

Making things better

Here are 15 tips, gathered from the Southam Literacy Survey and from literacy experts. They will not wipe illiteracy off the map in Canada, or stamp it out. But they will widen the magic circle of readers.

AT HOME

1. Read to children, read with children, read out loud, read silently, read alone, read together. Discuss the story and talk about the meaning of words.

2. Seize every chance to pass along tips about written language to children. For instance, point out the letters of their names on signs.

3. Watching television is inevitable, so talk about the programs. Encourage children to call out letters on the screen.

4. If you have trouble reading, consider cassette tapes with follow-along books for you and the children.

IN THE SCHOOLS

5. Ask questions — of the teachers, the principal, the board officials, the school trustees. Ask how reading and writing levels compare between schools and how the board fares on standardized evaluations. Demand that the provincial education ministry produce a layman's guide to what works in teaching and learning, as the U.S. education department did last year.

6. Perhaps the school system baffles or intimidates you. There are others equally baffled. Form a discussion group and ask local social service agencies, trade unions or community colleges for help.

7. Volunteer as a teacher's aide in schools.

IN THE COMMUNITY

8. Investigate the needs of the local literacy programs. Not everyone is cut out to be a literacy tutor but there are other ways to help.

9. Encourage the library to stock books and cassette tapes for adult learners and to follow Winnipeg's example of pairing adult "bookmates" with preschoolers.

10. Agitate for city hall to write public notices that are easily understood and also to offer literacy tutoring for municipal employees, as in Saint John, N.B.

11. Churches, clubs and professional associations are natural jumping-off points for a new literacy drive in the community.

12. Look to your local newspaper for leadership. No one has a bigger stake in literacy. And ask what literacy program is available for the paper's own employees.

ON THE JOB

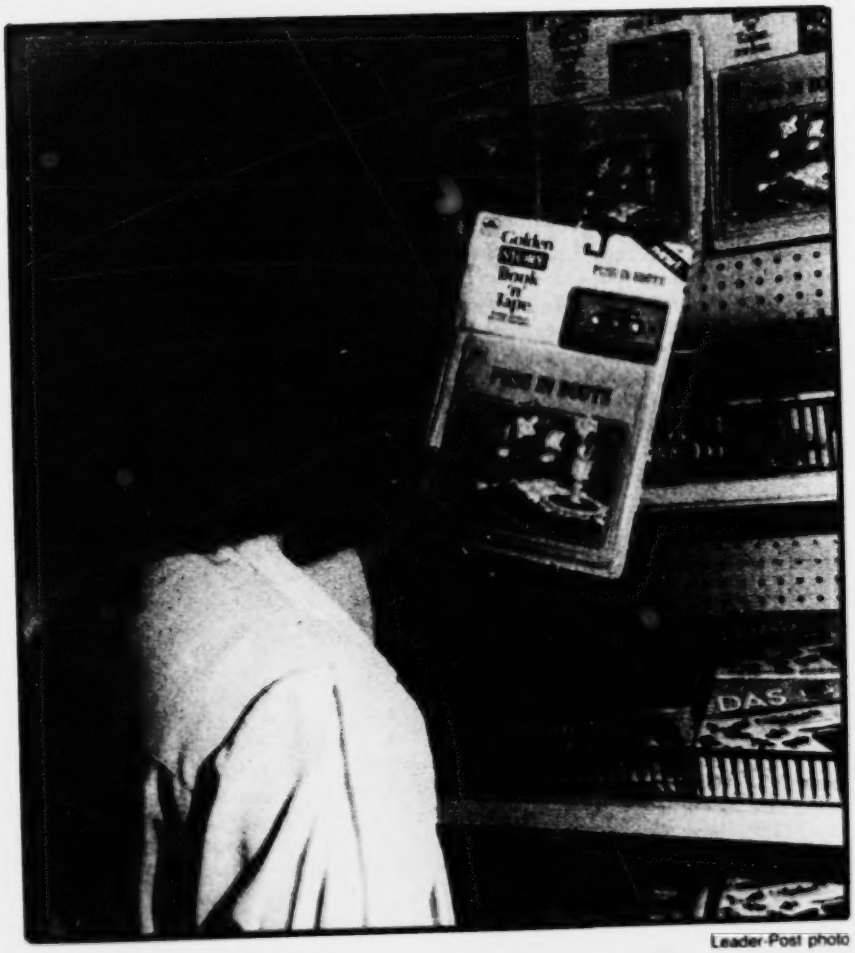
13. Employers can get in touch with either Laubach Literacy of Canada or Frontier College for information about literacy tutoring in the workplace. Union members can demand more emphasis on adult education provisions in contract bargaining.

IN THE NATION

14. Write and inform federal and provincial representatives of your keen interest in literacy. Inquire when the government will start a literacy program for its own employees (there are none now).

15. Lobby governments to make Plain English the rule for all official publications. Return examples of bureaucratic gobbledegook. Demand to know why federal and provincial governments haven't yet established an independent national education commission to monitor educational standards.

— CALAMAI



Leader-Post photo

Books with read-along tapes are a helpful tool

36

Can you help?
Call these places

[illegible]

[illegible]	848-7817
[illegible] Library	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]
Community Library	[illegible]
Public Library	[illegible]
NORTH BATTLEFORD	
[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	862-9833
[illegible]	425-2458
[illegible]	288-2113
[illegible]	(204) 687-3474
[illegible]	236-4249
[illegible]	533-2816
[illegible] Public Library	822-2814
[illegible] Public Library	425-2160
SASKATOON	
SWIFT CURRENT	
YORKTON-MELVILLE	
Parkland Regional College	[illegible]
Parkland Regional Library	[illegible]

[illegible] involved in the literacy [illegible]

[illegible], secretary of the Saskatchewan Literacy Council, 787-6816.

[illegible], Saskatchewan board member with the Movement for Canadian Literacy, 244-1114 in Saskatoon.

Laubach's representative in Saskatchewan is Ruth Thompson, at 382-0375 in Saskatoon.

Children

The sound of a father reading to his children is music to Barbara Wright's ears.

It's one of the rewards of helping adults learn to read, said Wright, a literacy volunteer who has tutored five students in four years.

"Every time I see a student doing something they haven't been able to do before, I get a personal sense of accomplishment," she said in an interview.

Using simple tools such as newspapers, magazines, cookbooks and tape recorders — she asked one student to tape the bedtime stories he read to his children — she helps people discover new interests and, sometimes, renewed self-confidence.

"I would play the tapes (of bedtime stories) back to myself and you could hear him from one week to the next gaining confidence in his ability to read. He felt comfortable and it would come out in his voice on the tape," she said.

Wright is a volunteer in an adult literacy program at the Regina Public Library. Started in 1977, the program has trained 504 tutors and helped 734 students.

Some are new Canadians who want to learn English as a second language. The rest are adults who, for one reason or another, never learned to read in school.

Most of Wright's students are in the second category. They pose a special challenge because they're often leery of trying again, she said.

"Because they've experienced failure earlier in their learning experiences, they feel they're going to fail again. Even though they're motivated — they made this decision themselves — they're afraid of failure."

To ease these fears, Wright meets students informally several times before the real work begins. She shows them around the library, helps them get a library card and encourages them to borrow a book. It gives them a reason to come back, she said.

After two or three informal meetings, the student is tested on reading and writing ability and comprehension. The test, which can take two or three hours, identifies strengths and weaknesses and helps the tutor plan lessons.

The lessons are designed around each student's needs and goals. Not every student wants to master novels; some simply want to learn to follow recipes or write letters to family. Tutors don't push them to do more.

"If students say they want to read to children or read recipes, once they reach that goal and they don't want to continue, they've finished the program.

can share in experience

as long as they're satisfied with what they've accomplished," said Wright.

Her current student is a 25-year-old man who wants to write his Grade 12 equivalency exam. Medical problems forced Paul (not his real name) to quit school in Grade 10 and the lack of a high school education has cost him jobs.

Paul could read but he couldn't always understand the material. "I never liked reading at all," he said in an interview. "It was difficult and discouraging and I felt, 'what's the sense in trying?' "

But after several discouraging years in and out of the workforce, he decided to brush up on his reading so he could write his Grade 12 equivalency exam.

The exam is still a long time away — Paul wants to make sure he is ready to write it — but the tutoring sessions are already paying off. He reads for pleasure and understands what he reads.

Wright, a book lover since childhood, understands the joy of reading. "Books and reading were always an important part of recreational activities at home," she said. "Not being able to read is like being deprived of one of your senses."

— SPENCER

BEING INVISIBLE

By W.P. KINSELLA

The only time my friend Frank Fence-post ever raise up his fist to me was when I suggest that maybe he should learn to read and write.

Frank and me been friends since before either of us can remember. When we was babies my mom and his used to put us in the same apple box, tie a string to it, slide us down the long hill to Blue Quills Hall or Hobbema General Store.

"You used to look like a couple of caterpillars in your snowsuits," Ma say to me once. "Even back then Frank could cry louder than any kid on the reserve."

I been covering for Frank, all through Grade School, and at the Tech School in Wetaskiwin where we studying to be mechanics. But I don't mind 'cause I'm not much of a fighter, even though I'm bigger and taller than Frank. And Frank be ready to mix it up as soon as he make eye contact with somebody, and he's mean as a bagful of bobcats when he get riled.

"I ain't **ever** goin' to," he say, and shake his fist under my nose.

"I just suggest it as a friend," I say. "It's not like you ain't smart. If you put half as much effort into learning to read as you do hiding the fact you can't, you'd be able to out-read and out-write me."

People think it's odd that me and Frank are friends, because we are about as opposite as two guys can be. There ain't no place Frank is afraid to go and almost nothing he is afraid to do.

Frank he run on instinct, while I think way too much. I wish I was as outgoing as Frank and that I could speak up smart answers the way he does. I mean after there been a run-in with Chief Tom and Pastor Orkin, I always think of something smart I could of said, a week or two after it happen. And I'd like to take some really crazy chances sometimes, the way Frank do, and I'd like to be able to stare a white girl in the eye until she make friends with me. Frank, though he hardly ever let on, is proud of me because of all the stories I got printed up.

I guess that's why we like each other; we each got something about him that the other one don't.

"According to a magazine I read," I go on, "there's over four million people in Canada who can't read enough to get by. So you ain't alone."

"Four million," say Frank. "That would fill up Blue Quills Hall a couple of times I bet. Maybe even as many people as came to the Duran Duran concert in Edmonton."

"At least that many," I say, glad Frank ain't thinking about punching my face any more.

We walking down the main street of Wetaskiwin, heading towards the Alice Hotel where we supposed to meet our girlfriends, when Frank ask me to read the lettering on the side of a bright-painted van. That was how come I suggested he should learn to read.

"You know, Frank," I said,

Art by Cam Cardow, Ottawa Citizen

"there ain't nothing wrong with admitting you can't do something."

"Yeah, but I'm supposed to know how."

"Who's the toughest guy on the reserve?" I ask, look like I'm changing the subject.

"Me."

"Come on. Who would you least like to have mad at you, and know they was going to pound you good the next time they seen you?"

"Mad Etta."

"Seriously."

"I am serious," and Frank dance backward down the street. "Well, maybe Robert Coyote."

Robert's fists is hard as if he holding a brick in each one, and he is the meanest street-fighter for I bet a hundred miles.

"You know Robert never learned to read until the last time he was in jail. He wasn't afraid to admit he couldn't."

"Yeah, but he's so tough he could wear panties and a bra to the Alice Hotel bar and nobody would laugh at him."

"Still he admitted he couldn't read, and they taught him down at Drumheller Jail."

I remember Robert joking about it when he got back to town. First thing he did was read all the signs behind the counter at Hobbema Pool Hall: NO CREDIT. NO FOUL LANGUAGE.

Robert laugh when he read that last sign, and he blast off enough swear words to turn Pastor Orkin green.

"You going to write down stories like Silas now that you learned how?" somebody ask him.

"Nah, I ain't gonna write nothing but bad cheques," and he grin wicked. "The reason I let them teach me was all the guys in the joint got dirty books in their cells. And I couldn't read them. I had to be stuck with looking at the pictures in Hustler and Penthouse. They sent this woman down from Calgary to teach us and I signed up. She started us with little kids' picture books with about one word to a page.

"About the second class I bring in one of these dirty books. 'This here's what I want to learn from,' is what I say. She look at the title. 'Call Girls in Bondage,' she read out loud, and the other guys in the class all laugh. 'I think you'll have to wait three or four classes before you can read this,' she say, but she smile at me real nice and I can tell she's there for more than just teaching reading and writing. There's a lot of women who get off on being around dangerous men, and she was one of them.

"I think it was the sixth week, I stay after class with my little book again. I can read most of it by then, and I pick out a real sexy part, say I'm having trouble with the words.

"She's never supposed to be alone with one of us guys. But I ain't surprised when she close the door to her office. I was sure sorry that class only last 12 weeks, and so was she."

"That your way of telling me I got to go to jail to learn to read?" Frank asked.

> ***'Frank, who usually afraid of nothing, quit the job altogether, rather than admit he couldn't read.'***

"You ought to do it," Robert say. "It couldn't make you any dumber than you are now, Fence-post," and he punch Frank's arm, leave bruises for about a month. But even Robert saying it OK to learn don't convince Frank.

But it look to me like he's weakening. I keep *reading* and *writing* in the conversation at the bar and at the Gold Nugget Cafe afterward. At the cafe, Frank he study the menu with a fierce eye, then he order for all four of us. I bet I only read that menu to Frank twice, and that was years ago, but he memorized the whole thing — something I couldn't do.

"Come on, Frank, why don't you give it a try?" says his girl, Connie.

"Will you teach me, Silas?"

"I suppose I could try to teach you, but I don't know the methods, and I don't think I should."

"I ain't goin' to school with no babies."

"You won't have to. Up in Edmonton, at Grant MacEwan Community College, they have what are called Adult Literacy classes. I read about them in the newspaper."

"Seems like a funny place for them to advertise for people who can't read," says Frank.

"You know, Silas," says Connie, "one time I told Frank he wasn't gonna get any more lovin' from me until he learned to write I LOVE YOU CONNIE BIGCHARLES. But you know Frank . . .," and she break into a sweet smile and hug Frank's neck.

"One hug is worth a thousand words," says Frank.

Late that night, while me and Frank are sitting at his cabin, Frank says, "You know what I'd like more than anything else? To be able to read your books. I don't know how else to say it, Silas, but when you can't read or write, it kind of like being invisible."

"I never thought of it like that."

"It's like having a bad scar in a place nobody can see, or a disease on the inside of you."

"They can cure diseases," I say, "especially ones like yours that ain't fatal. You **could** be like James Redbird who got the multiple sclerosis. Ain't nothing can be done for that."

"Yeah," says Frank. "Hey, remember that dumb job I had?"

One summer Frank he got work at the John Deere Tractor Store in Wetaskiwin. It wasn't fixing tractors like we been trained to do. He got to swamp out the garage and be a general gofer. Frank did a good job, and in a couple of weeks when the assistant in the parts department went on holidays they decided to move Frank to the order desk, where he would have had to fill out forms and read work sheets. Frank, who usually afraid of nothing, quit the job altogether, rather than admit he couldn't read.

"I remember," I say.

"I don't usually quit things. I just wasn't brave enough to let them know about my trouble."

"It isn't a question of being brave. It's just a matter of wanting a little more out of life."

"Yeah, but neither of my folks

Continued on next page

Continued from Page 39

were able to read. A lot of older people get by . . ."

"Times are changing too much. There's no place you can hide any more. You can't go out on a trap line and just stay there. There's no place Government forms don't get to these days."

Frank laugh. "You know down at the Tech School, they've never caught on because nobody there believes there's people who can't read and write. I told them in the office one day when they wanted me to fill out some form. 'Hey,' I said, 'I can't read this, and even if I could I can't write enough to fill it out!' 'Stop goofing off, Fence-post,' the office girl say to me. 'If you couldn't read and write you wouldn't be here.' "

"So you brought it to me and I filled it out for you."

"Right. Silas, if I go, you got to come with me."

"You're still a little afraid?"

"Hey, a Fence-post is afraid of nothing."

"It's all right to be afraid. You're going to do something totally new."

"I'm not afraid."

"I know. Here, let me show you something," and I open up one of my books. "Look at these rows and rows of squiggley black lines. You're not afraid of those are you?"

"Of course not."

"You're smarter than any row of squiggles."

"Damn right."

"Well, all you're gonna learn is how to outsmart those little alphabet letters. They got secrets they been keepin' from you. But you're gonna beat them at their own game."

"Right," says Frank. "Still . . ."

"You'd like a little company?"

"Yeah."

"OK, you got it. But I'm just gonna sit beside you. The teacher ain't gonna want me in the class because I read and write, and because I ain't paid. When she asks what I'm doin' there, you tell her I'm your friend and that I'm mute and need looking after, OK?"

"OK," says Frank.

The registration take place at the office for Continuing Education.

I read the catalogue to Frank.

There is a beginning and an advanced course in basic English for reading-disadvantaged people.

"Hey, none of this beginning stuff for me," says Frank. "I got 21 years experience as an illiterate. I want to go in the advanced class."

I fill out the application to put Frank in the beginning class. We take the form to the counter. The woman there look it over and then say to me, "We'll need some proof of your illiteracy, Mr. Post."

"How about if you ask me to read that sign on the wall and I'll say I can't," says Frank.

"I notice you've signed your application."

"When I was just a kid, Silas here wrote out my name and I learned to copy it down. It don't mean anything, honest."

> ***"Frank is walking along the walls, stopping at each poster or notice he come to, point out to me and anybody else who care to listen, which letters is A's, B's and C's."***

"Well . . ."

"How many people who can read and write sneak into these literacy classes?" I ask.

The secretary give me a mean look.

But that was about the only bureaucracy we suffer.

Like Frank ask, I go with him to the first class. In the afternoon Frank he bought himself a 100-page notebook with a picture of Blondie, the rock-and-roll singer, on the cover. He also acquired, as five-finger bargains, about a dozen felt pens, the same kind I use to write my stories.

"You figure I should get two pads in case I fill this one up tonight?"

"I think one will be enough for the first class."

The group meet in an ordinary classroom at Grant MacEwan College. The room is too hot and the lights are too bright. There is about 15 people there, all sit shy and stare at their feet. There is a lady about my ma's age, who look Indian, so we sit next to her. There is also a man and woman, look to be Chinese, a dark man wear a red turban, while the rest is white, range from a guy about our age to an old man with a white moustache.

The teacher is young and pretty and introduce herself as Elizabeth Stranger. She call out everybody's name and as she do people raise their hand so she can check them off her list.

"There are three more people here than I have on my list," she says. "Did someone bring a friend along for moral support? That's quite all right, you know."

Frank's hand shoot up.

"My friend here is nude. He need lookin' after."

The teacher smile nice, but puzzled.

"You can't tell by the way he looks. But he can't say a word, even if you was to pay him a dollar."

I'd have had Frank here years ago if I could talk like Miss Stranger. In half an hour she have people feeling good about themselves and so proud they make the move to come to class they can hardly wait to get started.

"I know what you've gone through," Miss Stranger say. "Every billboard, every storefront, every banner is a consistent reminder that you can't read. You learn to lie, to invent reasons why you can't read aloud from a book. And you develop an elephant's memory.

"People who are illiterate have to memorize signs, sometimes whole forms or order blanks; you have to guess at the meaning of words from other clues. I remember once I went to apply for a job and I stood outside a door with the work PERSONNEL written on it, studied it for a long time trying to guess what it might be. Finally I asked someone where the Personnel Office was. They pointed at the door and said, 'What's the matter, can't you read?'"

That was the way she let us know

she been illiterate at one time, too.

"Illiteracy has virtually nothing to do with intelligence. You've all become experts in failure, but, starting tonight, we're going to put an end to your failures."

Miss Stranger get out some cards with pictures and letters on them. The letter A got a picture of an apple, the letter B the picture of a bear, and so on.

"You still want me to stay?" I ask Frank at intermission.

Frank is walking along the walls, stopping at each poster or notice he come to, point out to me and anybody else who care to listen, which letters is A's, B's and C's.

"Maybe just to the end of this class. I hope we learn about whole words when we go back in. And, Silas," Frank grin kind of sheepish at me, like he do when he get caught in a lie, "thanks for keeping after me," and he clap my shoulder with his hand.

Second half of the class Miss Stranger ask each person to tell why he or she want to learn to read and write.

"My wife just had a baby," say the guy about my age, "and I want to be able to read bedtime stories to him, like my old man did for me."

"I want to read the Bible," say the Indian woman near us, "and to pass the word of the Lord on to my friends and relatives." We move a couple of seats farther away so people won't think we're with her.

"I am tired of working on the assembly line," say the man with the turban. "I wish to be employed in the office."

"I want to be able to write bad cheques," says Frank when his turn come.

"I see," says Miss Stranger, while most everyone laugh. "Well, Mr. Fence-post, we're an equal-opportunity literacy class. Just don't call on me as a character witness if you get arrested."

"When he gets arrested, not if . . ." I say.

"I thought you were mute," says Miss Stranger.

"This here's Silas Ermineskin who's had about five books printed up, and I'm gonna learn to read them all," says Frank.

The teacher smile and go on with the lesson.

The first three or four weeks Frank get real frustrated that they don't teach him faster. He bug me about 12 hours a day to help him sound out words and make up alphabet letters.

But then he catch on to reading a few words together, and he learn to write short sentences. One day he come to me with "My brother is a green pig" written on a sheet of paper.

I check the spelling and that all the letters is made right.

"I never knew you could write down things that wasn't possible," Frank say. I have to puzzle over that for a while. Guess only someone who just discover the wonder of writing would think that way.

I pick Frank up when his last class is over. He come out holding a little certificate that says he has satisfactorily completed the Adult Literacy Class. He read the certificate to me about 50 times, point out his name each time. He even read the name of the printer, which is in real tiny letters in the bottom corner.

We park the truck downtown, decide to go have a drink to celebrate.

As we walk, Frank turn in circles, like a dog chasing his tail, afraid he going to miss some of the signs we pass by.

"BUS STOP, NO PARKING," read Frank. "SEASON'S GREETINGS."

He stare all around for something else to read, his head going from side to side as his eyes search.

"PLUMBING AND HEATING," he read from a neon sign across the street. "GOLD COINS BOUGHT AND SOLD. COMPLETE LINE OF WALLPAPER, PAINT AND STAIN," he call out as we pass store windows.

"HAMBURGERS, FRENCH FRIES, APPLE PIE," he go on. "JOHN THE LOCKSMITH, KEYS CUT. TRAVEL AGENCY. ON SALE. DIAMOND RINGS. MARY LYLE'S BEAUTY SALON."

Then we come to a broad fence have a whole lot of writing on it. There is the peace sign, and below it someone has written NUKE THE WHALES. There are about two dozen four-letter words. And among them is written LOVE IS A FOUR LETTER WORD. Someone else wrote SAVE THE SALMON, CAN AN INDIAN.

"Hey, Silas," Frank yell, "I always wanted to be able to write on a wall."

I think I know how excited he is. It must be something like the feeling I had the first time I got a letter saying one of my stories was to be printed in a magazine.

I watch as Frank take out a felt pen, study the fence for a while before he write THE GREAT FENCE-POST WAS HERE! Then he smile something fierce and go bounding off down the street.

He get at least a half a block ahead of me. The streets are quiet and there is frost on the parking meters and trolley wires.

"CRAWFORD AND KIRK, ATTORNEYS AT LAW," he is yelling. "CANADA TRUST. TOYOTA COROLLA. PASSENGER LOADING ZONE AT ALL TIMES . . ."

W.P. Kinsella was born in 1935 and grew up on a farm near Lac Ste. Anne, Alta. From 1970 to 1974, he attended the University of Victoria where he studied creative writing. He now lives in White Rock, B.C. His first book, a collection of stories called Dance Me Outside, appeared in 1977. His first novel, Shoeless Joe, was published after Kinsella won the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship. He was the first Canadian author to win that award. Moccasin Telegraph and Other Stories is his most recent book. Kinsella's other books include Scars, Born Indian, Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa and The Iowa Baseball Confederacy.

Desire to leave school traps many natives in dead-end jobs

For Linus Stonehouse, school was a prison.

"I just wanted to be free, not trapped inside four walls listening to a teacher talk about things I didn't care about," says the 43-year-old status Indian from Wollaston Lake, who doesn't want his real name used.

"I much preferred to spend my time fishing and hunting, not wasting my time in school," he says.

After numerous run-ins with the school truant officer, Linus got the freedom he craved when he was expelled from Grade 8 at the age of 16.

What he didn't realize at the time is that he merely exchanged one form of prison for another.

The new jail was one of dead-end, low-paying jobs that often ended in his being laid off. When he went to look for another job, he had to spend several agonizing hours trying to fill out the job application form so that it would be "just right."

Linus is now trying to upgrade his education to a Grade 12 level so he can get into an auto repair program at Wascana Institute of Applied Arts and Science in Regina. He is just one of the thousands of native people in Saskatchewan who grew up without learning how to read or write properly.

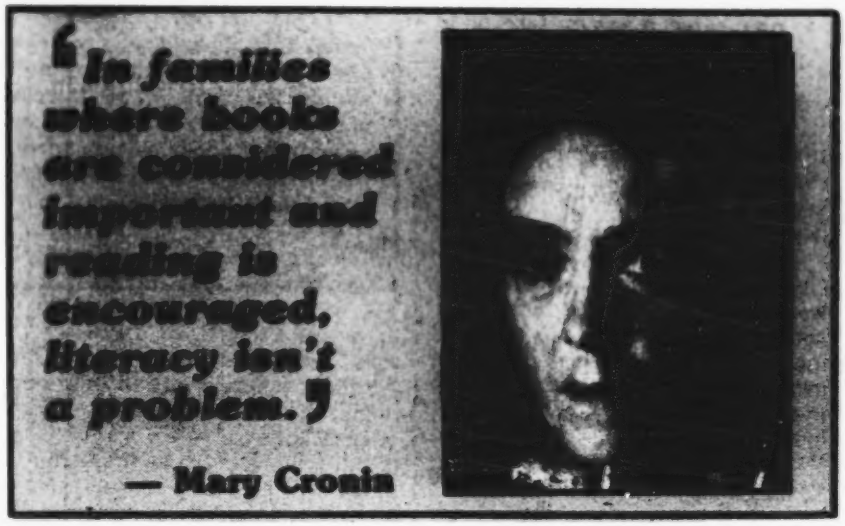
According to a report on native education put out by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, approximately 45 per cent of native people have an education of less than Grade 9, compared to about 22 per cent among non-natives.

"For many natives, especially those in the north, English is their second language," says Penny Carriere, who coordinates adult basic education courses at Northlands Career College in La Ronge.

Carriere says that isolation and the traditional native way of life in northern Saskatchewan might also explain why so many Indians and Metis don't acquire adequate reading and writing skills.

"In the north, you'll have people going on the traplines for weeks at a time, which makes it very difficult for children to go to school," she says. The limited and sometimes troublesome road system doesn't help much either, she says.

"You also have to remember that in some communities, schools are relatively new additions, so the history of education in the north is quite short."



University of Regina education professor Mary Cronin says the oral tradition in Indian and Metis culture might also be a factor that contributes to native illiteracy in a society where the written word takes precendence over the spoken word.

"It's a well-known fact that in families where books are considered important and reading is encouraged, literacy isn't a problem," she says.

Al Hergott, assistant director with the Education Department's community education branch, says the reasons for illiteracy among natives are probably no different than the reasons for anyone who must deal with poverty, alcoholism, racism and other social problems on a daily basis.

"These are conditions that would make it difficult for anyone to concentrate on getting an education."

Hergott says many native people have to deal with these problems more than other groups because of the conditions under which they are forced to live.

He adds that racism, especially in urban areas, is probably one of the major reasons why native children drop out of a school system that mainly caters to the needs of a white, middle-class society.

"When children are young, they don't notice the differences between natives, whites, blacks or anyone else. But when they hit adolescence, they start to look at the world in a different way, and the world looks differently at them. That's when native children start to experience prejudice in a real way."

He says it's not surprising that the dropout rate among natives is high, reaching more than 90 per cent in the inner city, as students become disillusioned with society.

Hergott is quick to point out that while the school system isn't overtly racist, it often doesn't meet the special cultural and social needs of native children. He said that if more natives are to graduate from high school and go on to university, the school system will have to provide programs that respond to the special needs of Indians and Metis.

"It's important that all students see the relevance of what they're learning, and this applies to native students too. They have to see aspects of their lives reflected in the school curriculum."

Marine Perran, executive director of planning and information services with the Education Department, says great strides have been made in developing school materials that reflect native history and culture. While these are primarily intended to make native children feel more comfortable in school, they're also designed to help non-natives better understand and appreciate Indian and Metis culture.

"It's important that natives are made to feel that they are a valuable part of society. To do this, you have to expose non-natives to native culture so that they can learn to appreciate it."

— OLIJNYK

Ottawa keeps dragging its feet through 16 years of reports

OTTAWA — The federal government's record on literacy is a series of opportunities wasted, warnings ignored and political pettiness displayed by both Liberal and Conservative administrations.

The latest addition to this doleful litany is the $1 million in "development" funds for literacy announced Sept. 8, all that Secretary of State David Crombie was able to salvage from an initial multi-million dollar request to the federal cabinet this spring.

Crombie concedes he's struggling to get some sort of permanent federal commitment to literacy in place before the existing public interest falls off.

"We've got to capture the interest and make sure it's going to continue. We want to be here for the long haul."

Literacy groups can be forgiven for being skeptical; they've heard such promises before, starting with the 1971 report of a Senate committee on poverty that recommended a national office to set educational goals for the country. The same idea was repeated in 1985 by the Macdonald Royal Commission, a good indication of how little progress has been made.

Numerous other warnings have also been ignored by federal authorities: a 1976 report by the Senate finance committee; a 1979 commission of inquiry for the federal labor minister; a 1984 royal commission on employment equality; a 1984 task force report to the employment minister; and a 1986 Senate report on youth.

"Adult illiteracy in Canada is a serious social and economic problem which is being largely ignored," the 1979 inquiry warned.

The current federal government has also ignored the Conservative party's own blueprint for combating adult literacy, drawn up 3½ years ago by a task force on manpower retraining appointed by then Opposition leader Brian Mulroney.

The Tory task force recommended a federal-provincial conference "for the sole purpose of developing an action plan to combat adult illiteracy."

Also recommended was a public advocacy campaign about illiteracy and immediate work on developing teaching materials for volunteer tutors. No action was taken on either proposal.

Inside the federal bureaucracy, a few

officials have waged an isolated and increasingly demoralized struggle to get more attention paid to the growing illiteracy problem.

"It should be readily apparent that the federal government of Canada's direct contribution to literacy education is no more than a pittance," said an internal report in December, 1984, from the training branch of the Employment and Immigration Department.

And a shrinking pittance. The only federal training program that provided upgrading for people with reading and writing skills below a high school level was deliberately cut back by officials and politicians — because it was too popular.

The program, known as Basic Training for Skills Development, helped more than 55,000 functional illiterates in 1972-73. By 1984-85, the total number of trainees had been slashed to 29,000 and recent administrative changes effectively bar the majority of functional illiterates.

Why? Because Ottawa wasn't going to pay for cleaning up mistakes made by the provinces.

"The BTSD component appears to be directed at meeting worker needs which have resulted from deficiencies in provincial educational programs," intoned the Nielsen Task Force in March, 1985.

Senators had trotted out the same line in 1975 when they grilled the late Bob Andras, then Liberal manpower minister, about which level of government was responsible for under-educated adults.

"The fact is that they do exist," Andras shot back. "Whether it is their fault or the fault of the educational system does not enter into it. They are now on our doorstep."

But the federal government has even ducked illiteracy when its jurisdictional authority was undisputed. Decades of inadequate schooling for Indians have contributed to soaring illiteracy rates among natives. In 1982, the Economic Council of Canada noted in astonishment that Ottawa had axed much-needed adult education programs on Indian reserves.

Language training for immigrants also falls far short of functional literacy, according to numerous studies.

Yet the federal bungling extends beyond the political pettiness and ignored warnings. Ottawa also managed to abandon the most successful adult literacy approach ever developed in the country.

The BLADE program, for Basic Literacy for Adult Development, was part of an ambitious series of pilot projects in the early 1970s run by NewStart corporations in six provinces. It was one of the first do-it-yourself literacy courses in the world.

But when the sponsoring NewStart corporations reached their scheduled end after five years, federal officials were deaf to pleas that BLADE be salvaged and further refined.

"They just weren't willing to get into a fight with the provinces over who should be responsible for literacy," says Luke Batdorf, who worked on the NewStart program and is now president of Laubach Literacy of Canada.

"And they still aren't. They have historical amnesia."

— CALAMAI

Illiteracy contributes to life of crime

TORONTO (CP) — Tracy LeQuyere was a prisoner long before he was jailed.

He came from a loving, middle-class family, but school troubles led him to the street's alluring sub-culture at 14 and into a life of crime — and, finally, 65 charges and 18 months behind bars.

But what really separated LeQuyere from society's mainstream was a confinement called illiteracy.

Like any good con artist, he was adept at deception. When asked to read, he would pretend he had misplaced his glasses. When told to write, he would claim a sprained hand. When he drove, others would be asked to find the destination. When he dined, he would let others order first and add: "I'll have the same."

He was showered with gifts as a child, but didn't know who sent them. Girlfriends poured out their hearts in love letters, but he couldn't tell what they said. Labels and street signs warned — LeQuyere was oblivious.

Today, he says flatly: "I believed I should be dead because I couldn't read."

But LeQuyere, 35, is very much alive, a self-described "born-again reader" who went straight a couple of years ago and now helps street kids in Toronto teach other street kids how to read and write and — just maybe — avert the inevitable dead end.

A UNESCO conference boldly declared last fall that all people have a right to learn, including the right to read and write. But the education system clearly hasn't done the job.

An estimated one million Canadians can't read or write and experts believe another three million don't possess enough literacy skills to function properly. In all, the problem may affect one in five Canadians older than 15.

Governments don't know what to do about it. Ottawa says education is a provincal matter. Provinces largely pass on the problem to the local school boards, which find themselves barely equipped to deal with classroom troubles.

"Illiteracy must be serving somebody well, or else they'd be doing something about it," says Budd Hall of Toronto, secretary-general of the International Council on Adult Education. 'I think governments see help as a charitable thing — as being nice to people."

Compounding the problem has been the introduction of computers, which has created a form of super-literacy and widened the gap between the haves and have-nots. Teachers are even worried about those who stay in school.

"Forty years ago, if you didn't know how to read you found a job; today, you become unemployed and pretty much stay that way," says John O'Leary, director of development at the Toronto-based Frontier College, a 90-year-old institute which helps people learn to read.

An estimated 135,000 people need help in the city of Toronto — thousands more in the suburbs — but there is room for fewer than 4,000 in programs. Even so, compared with other centres, Toronto is served well.

"Most communities don't have literacy programs," O'Leary says.

LeQuyere and partner Rick Parsons run a much-praised program called Beat the Street from the third floor of a downtown shelter for women. Prostitutes, drug users, runaways and bag ladies tutor each other in one-on-one sessions. Almost 200 participate.

"We're a neutral zone for the kids," says Parsons. "They come up to us beat up, punched out, tired, hungry. We don't judge what they do. We just help them read."

LeQuyere sums up the program's impact: "All the people we've taught the word 'caution' to — I wonder how many lives we've saved."

Lois is a teen mother whose child was simply taken away one night while she was hooking on the street. LeQuyere and Parsons met her one day in the park and handed her a pamphlet. She checked other street kids about the program and turned up for lessons.

In the space of a few months, she has spent more than 100 hours acquiring skills. She doesn't talk of goals — "it'll just help me," she says simply — but her new ability may just be enough to keep her from the street.

Cheryl was also a teen prostitute. In less than eight months, she went from Grade 2 to Grade 9 proficiency in subjects she long ago gave up. She is rehearsing a speech for the day she'll receive a Beat the Street diploma.

LeQuyere, who now roams the streets as a kind of folk hero, may soon take his program to Edmonton and other cities.

"The problem isn't the one million people who can't read," he says. "It's the 23 million who can, but won't help."

Beat the

WINNIPEG (CP) — The federal government has given Frontier College, an adult education organization, $1.2 million to teach illiterate street people in two Western Canadian cities to read and write over the next three years.

Frontier president Jack Pearpoint called the grant, announced in September, the most significant ever for a literary program in Canada.

"Funding for literacy programs right across the country has been almost nil historically, so what we're looking at is a major breakthrough," Pearpoint said.

"It's a long way from what's required, but is a dramatic first step."

The recent Southam Literacy Survey estimated five million Canadians lack basic reading and writing skills.

Pearpoint said Toronto-based Frontier will use the money to set up "Beat the Street" programs in Winnipeg and one other city, either Regina, Calgary or Edmonton.

Frontier helped set up a similar project in Toronto two years ago with no government assistance, though part of its budget now comes from the provincial government.

Federal Youth Minister Jean Charest announced the federal money at a news conference in a cramped office on Main Street, which the Winnipeg Beat the Street project will use as a base.

"It's the first time we've ever done this," Charest said.

"This is untested for us as a federal government."

Funding for the literacy project comes from federal money budgeted for solving labor market problems.

Rick Parsons and Tracy LeQuyere, co-ordinators of the Toronto Beat the Street program, said they use one-on-one tutoring to teach basic reading and writing to street people in their own environment.

"Where our lessons take place will be in a street, in a restaurant, in a laneway," said Parsons. "Wherever these kids hang around, wherever they feel comfortable, will be exactly the place where the tutors will be teaching them. Punk rockers will teach punk rockers, bag ladies can teach bag ladies, bikers can teach bikers."

Tutors are usually people who have learned to read and write through the program and have credibility with street people.

"The reason why we're approachable, why the kids like us, why native folks like us, is that we're not counsellors, we're not cops and we're not their

Street gets federal funding

mother," LeQuyere said.

He said teaching street people to read and write is more important than providing soup kitchens and other handouts.

"People are feeding people nowadays, giving out clothing nowadays. I believe if you don't put something between their ears they'll never get off the street and that's what it boils down to."

He estimated 50 per cent of street people are illiterate.

"You can't use the newspaper, you can't use Canada Manpower, you can't use a lot of things, so how can you get off the street?"

Blanche MacDonald, who is co-ordinating the Beat the Street projects in Western Canada, said the emphasis will be on helping native youths, many of whom can't get jobs because they are illiterate.

Only 26 per cent of 13,300 natives aged 15-24 in Manitoba are employed.

Survey shows even literates have hard time with newspapers

OTTAWA — Most Canadians say they spend about 50 minutes a day looking through the newspaper.

The majority read local, national and international stories and more than half read the ads. Good news for the newspaper business, right?

The circulation department boasts its product is hitting the market and the advertising department tells clients their goods are widely promoted.

But the findings of the Southam Literacy Survey should be unsettling for news editors and reporters.

The ability to point out simple and basic information is beyond the grasp of many readers of their stories.

For example:

- In the survey, 52 per cent failed to identify a key character in a 10-paragraph rescue story, even with the sample story still in front of them. The man's importance was spelled out immediately after the first reference to his name in the fourth paragraph and the description of his role was nearly word-for-word that of the question. In addition, respondents had a 25-per-cent chance of guessing right from one of the four multiple choice possibilities;
- More than half the respondents were unable to select the main purpose of a five-paragraph business article although the answer was stated in the first paragraph.

Literate Canadians did better on the survey's nine newspaper items with an average score of 70 per cent. Functional illiterates scored poorly at 40 per cent, a flattering figure considering one-quarter of this grouping had done so poorly on an earlier test that they weren't exposed to this second group of questions about news stories.

But literates shouldn't smugly assume their higher level of comprehension shows they can astutely follow the news. Forty-four per cent of these people couldn't pick the right guy in the rescue story.

Women scored better than men on eight of the nine questions and people who did the survey in English performed better than their French counterparts on seven tasks.

Although Canadians older than 55 are the heaviest users of newspapers and spend the most time going through them, their level of understanding is significantly lower than younger adults.

These findings seem to support grizzled editors whose first lesson to cub reporters is to write stories aimed at the mythical common man — a reader with a Grade 9 education.

> ***Findings seem to support grizzled editors whose first lesson to cub reporters is to write stories aimed at the mythical common man — a reader with a Grade 9 education.***

Lengthy features or analyses would seem beyond the grasp of most readers who won't get near the bottom of a story, let alone understand why it was written. Consider that 56 per cent of those surveyed couldn't underline the salient point of a sample editorial.

The results may also explain the success in major metropolitan areas of colorful tabloids emphasizing big pictures, big headlines and short stories.

Consider as well that when an adult is interviewed at home for these surveys, the responses may not be totally honest — or put in a softer light, they may be exaggerated.

U.S. literacy expert Jonathan Kozol believes newspaper readership levels as they are usually reported are simply bogus.

If the figures have any meaning at all, "it might refer to people who buy newspapers," Kozol says. "It certainly does not describe the people capable of reading that part of the newspaper that justifies a newspaper's existence."

In the Southam study, 45 per cent of basic illiterates — those who have fundamental problems reading and writing — said they read a newspaper every day, including weekends. Totalling all respondents, 60 per cent said the same thing.

An additional 21 per cent of the total said they read a paper several times a week.

On average, illiterates who said they looked at a weekend paper reported they devoted 64 minutes to the task, 10 minutes more than literate Canadians who looked at a Saturday or Sunday edition.

Other comprehensive media research studies have found similar results.

An Environics Research Group media study conducted in late 1986 found 78 per cent reported a daily newspaper was an important part of their daily life. The 1986 National Audience Databank report said Canadians spend an average of 86 minutes going through a weekend paper and 57 minutes for a weekday edition.

Differences between illiterates and literates are more dramatic when it comes to time reading magazines and books. The average illiterate spends 67 minutes a week on magazines compared to 97 minutes for literates, and 2½ hours a week reading books, two hours less than literates.

Illiterates more commonly read the Bible and other religious material while literates lean more to reference books, fiction and manuals.

Add in the 16.4 hours per week the Southam respondents said they watched TV and the results indicate the average Canadian devotes about four hours a day to sucking in news, information or visual entertainment. And that doesn't include radio.

Some social scientists challenge these numbers, arguing people being surveyed overestimate how much time they spend on leisure activities or are too embarrassed to admit to pollsters they can't or don't read.

One 1981 report conducted for the federal government concluded the average Canadian devotes 47 minutes a day to reading — 19 to newspapers, 18 to books and 10 to magazines. One-third of that time was considered to be a secondary activity such as flipping through the newspaper while watching a televised hockey game.

— CALAMAI

Diplomas for illiterates

OTTAWA — Can eight per cent of university graduates in Canada really be functionally illiterate?

Yes and no, says Dr. Paul Nesbitt, supervisor of the Southern Literacy Survey conducted by The Creative Research Group.

"There really does seem to be a small number who get passed through university," Nesbitt says.

"There's a different skill needed to write a cheque — as asked on our test — and getting a passing grade from a professor."

Nesbitt noted other explanatory factors:

- People being surveyed sometimes exaggerate when asked about their education levels, saying for instance that they graduated from university when in fact they flunked out, perhaps because of a campus literacy test.
- Illiteracy rises steadily with age, almost doubling among the university crowd when comparing the youngest and oldest groups. In effect, once-adequate literacy skills have eroded with time.
- Foreign-born residents who say they have university degrees are three times as likely to be functionally illiterate as those born in Canada. If foreign-born university grads are dropped from the survey, the illiteracy rate among graduates — all Canadian-born — drops to five per cent.

Statistics aside, there's at least one flesh-and-blood Canadian university graduate currently getting instruction in a literacy program.

Now middle-aged, this man was born into a wealthy family, went to private schools and graduated from one of the country's best-known universities.

Said one literacy worker who knows the man: "It wouldn't surprise me to discover that his family were big contributors to that university."

At the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Prof. Mark Holmes notes that students who failed the English proficiency test at the University of Alberta a few years ago still managed to pass all their other courses.

"They were succeeding in university without being literate," he says. "I don't think universities should be putting illiterate graduates out on the market."

— CALGARY

Reasons for becoming literate are topic of nationwide debate

FORTUNE, Nfld. — In a pin-neat kitchen at the back of a turquoise-trimmed clapboard house, Charlotte Piercey and Ray Felix discuss Ellen Bell's eggs.

"The eggs are fresh. They are very fresh. Ms. Bell sells many fresh eggs. She sells twelve fresh eggs for seventy cents."

Felix reads confidently as Piercey moves her finger along the words. He's 35 and left school after Grade 5 to work in a fish plant. She's the clerk of this town nestled at the foggy end of the Burin Peninsula.

Together they're engaged in literacy.

In a sweltering, untidy room on the top floor of a skid road community centre in Vancouver, Linda Forsythe and 21 others discuss the price of coffee, the exploitation of Indians and the inalienable rights of students.

They're engaged in LITERACY.

"Our job here is empowerment," says Forsythe. "We have to get these people to take charge."

In between — geographically and ideologically — at a community centre in Scarborough, Ont., nine volunteer literacy tutors listen with some trepidation as Joy Evans of Frontier College suggests they try both literacy and LITERACY.

"Tutors are not obligated to get involved with their students in terms of advocacy, but the students do have a lot of needs," Evans says.

These three vignettes give a glimpse of the issue which most divides Canada's literacy groups — whether to teach literacy as an end in itself or as a means to other ends. Much of the constant squabbling among literacy groups arises from this fundamental disagreement over purpose.

Evelyn Murialdo calls it the difference between little-l literacy and big-L LITERACY.

"I relate Literacy as knowing, understanding, living and learning," she says at the Toronto offices of the International Council for Adult Education.

"I don't want to teach literacy to someone, teach them how to read and write, without touching their lives, without picking out with them the things they need to learn in order to have a place in this society. I don't want to do that."

Now listen to Luke Batdorf, president of Laubach Literacy of Canada:

Luke Batdorf

"They (the big-L advocates) see the illiterate person as an underdog, so of course they're in hurry. They see literacy only as a tool for social justice or equal rights. I think that's very patronizing."

Batdorf's agitated tone also conveys some of the annoyance that Laubach feels over constant attacks on its teaching materials, such as the story of Ellen Bell's eggs.

"Laubach is so boring," exclaims Marion Wells of the Saint John Learning Centre.

"The books don't afford any meaningful feedback to the student. You get to the end of the page and what have you learned?"

From the empowerment camp, that's one of the gentler criticisms of Laubach. Like warring religious factions, the groups assail one another's doctrine, dogma and paternity. Often the illiterates seeking help appear to be sacrificed to the ideological battle.

Other issues also split the naturally fractious literacy groups: paid teachers versus volunteer tutors, community versus national and using phonics or a whole language approach.

"Oh, dear," sighs Audrey Thomas at her home in Victoria, B.C. "I tried to lay that ghost to rest in my report."

Thomas's report, published in 1983 by Canada's committee for UNESCO, was the most comprehensive look at literacy in Canada. It concluded that "no single, highly-specialized method secured superior results" in teaching illiterates.

More recently, research at the University of Calgary's Reading and Language Centre came to the same conclusion after directly comparing the Laubach approach with another which avoids phonics as much as possible.

"I would never argue that one is better," says centre director Grace Malichy. "For the vast majority of illiterates, a variety of approaches will work almost equally well. But for some we must identify the correct approach."

In Edmonton, Mary Norton says the correct approach begins not with the choice of technique but with involving the whole community so literacy programs will survive the uncertainty of government funding.

"We need to build a strong base so that we have a long-term plan rather than a quick fix," says Norton, who headed a province-wide study of literacy services.

The paid teachers versus local volunteers debate is equally divisive.

Teachers see potential new jobs in the literacy field as enrolment in regular schools continues to dwindle, but governments are attracted by the cost savings of using volunteers.

"When bureaucrats say that volunteers are okay for adult literacy, I think it's a class thing," says Serge Wagner, a University of Quebec literacy expert.

"Those same bureaucrats couldn't dare say that volunteers should be responsible for teaching their children to read and write."

They might if they could see the calibre of volunteer that Toronto's Frontier College attracts.

Two men and seven women, most in their 30s, are almost quivering with anticipation at an orientation session in early July.

The patter is fast and verging on evangelical: "People call me and ask what do you have to do to be a tutor. They say they've never taught, they've never been to college. And this is what I tell them," Joy Evans is saying:

"Believe the person can learn."

Two months later, eight of the nine have believed enough to be tutoring illiterate students in their homes during the evenings. — CALAMAI

LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Using the NEWSPAPER

Ideas for Literacy

Teaching Strategies for the Regular Classroom, English as a Second Language and Adult Education

Ideas for Literacy

The literacy instruction used in schools, community/regional colleges, libraries or by volunteer tutors can vary substantially. Therefore, the teaching strategies that follow have been structured to appeal to the creativity of individual educators. The activities cover many grade levels and should be adaptable to any given teaching situation.

The ideas presented will not only assist educators directly in supplementing current lessons, but should encourage the development of new methods as well. It is hoped that this effort will contribute to moving us ever closer to a common goal of having all people in our society share the gift of literacy.

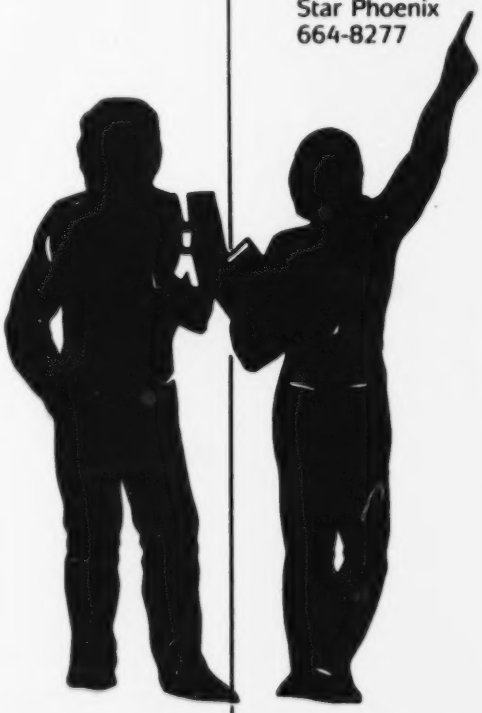
For further information regarding Newspaper In Education programs available contact the Co-ordinator in your area.

SASKATOON

Georgina Kyle
NIE Co-ordinator
Star Phoenix
664-8277

REGINA

Wally Sadowsky
Educational Services
Co-ordinator
Leader-Post
565-8248



Introducing the Newspaper to Your Students

Students may not be familiar with the newspaper. Use the following activities as a way of introducing them to the newspaper.

1. Provide students free reading time so they can discover for themselves what is in a newspaper.
2. Explain the index and how it can help readers find what they want to know. Make a game out of seeing who can find things fastest.
3. Show students how to skim a newspaper—use headlines, and the photos until they find a story that interests them. Read the article.
4. Explain the inverted pyramid style of writing (the most important information is at the beginning and less important details follow).
5. Practice finding the 5 W's and H in news leads (who, what, where, when, why and how).
6. Explain that specific sections contain certain items.
7. A newspaper is dedicated to four functions—to inform, interpret, serve and entertain. Help students find these examples.
8. Discuss five consequences if newspapers did not exist. Brainstorm as to why people read newspapers.

A Student Newspaper Reading Inventory

A good way to introduce a newspaper unit to your students is to conduct a newspaper reading inventory by using the following questionnaire.

- What part of the newspaper do you read first?
- What other sections of the newspaper do you like to read?
- Do you read a newspaper every day? every few days? every few weeks?
- Do you read the newspaper at home? at school? elsewhere?
- Do you enjoy talking about current events? why?
- Do most of the people you know read the newspaper often? If so, what parts do they usually read?
- Where do you get most of your information about what is going on in the world? From the newspaper? from television? from the radio? from talking to other people?
- What differences have you noticed in hearing the news on television or radio and reading it in the newspaper?
- Can you think of three ways in which reading a newspaper could be helpful to you?
- Why do you think newspapers are published?
- What would you like to know about newspapers that you do not know now?
- Have you ever contacted the newspaper plant? For what purpose? What was your experience?

Scavenger Hunts

Using todays newspaper see how many of the following you can find in fifteen minutes. The scavenger hunt is a fun way to find your way around in the newspaper and can be modified to meet the objectives of a particular lesson.

GRADES K - 3 LEVEL

- a picture of someone who is happy
- a number greater than 100
- a picture that shows something you can ride
- the first letter of your last name

Ideas for Literacy

- a question mark
- a contraction you found in a comic strip
- the page number where you can find the weather map
- a capital letter "B" and a lower case "b"
- something happening in a comic strip that is not real
- something that uses electricity
- something living
- pictures of two different sports
- something to eat

GRADES 4 - 8 LEVEL

- a three-syllable word in a headline
- the high temperature in Regina yesterday
- a mixed number
- a city in Europe
- name of the editor
- a 1985 car that costs less than $6,000
- a used car ad that contains opinion
- a city within 100 miles of Saskatoon
- the phone number you call to place a classified ad
- the movie playing at a theatre
- a how-to-do-it article
- three items for sale that cost less than $3
- a classified ad that sells a service
- a vehicle other than a car
- two words that are antonyms
- four examples of punctuation marks

GRADES 9 - 12 LEVEL

- a word that describes your community
- a person to whom you would like to write a letter

- a news article that gives its source of information
- a stock with a net gain of 2 or more
- an article about a subject that will affect the cost of living
- a display ad designed for young people
- a company logo
- a crisis situation
- a used car ad that contains opinion
- the cost of a kilogram of meat
- a house for rent for less than $600 a month
- an item for sale that has been reduced at least 30%

- a word new to your vocabulary
- an example of a pun
- a colorful verb
- a job that does not require a college education
- an item for sale that is seasonal
- a single word that summarizes a front page story

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

- the word Canada
- a picture of Brian Mulroney (or another prominent politician)
- a film you would like to see
- today's temperature
- a picture of people engaged in a sport
- an ad for something you would like to buy; circle the price
- the name of the newspaper
- a new word that you would like to learn
- an article about something interesting happening in your community
- a picture of an animal—what kind of animal is it?

ADULT EDUCATION

- Canada's name
- an item which is helpful for budgeting or financial planning
- a new word that you would like to learn
- 3 different styles of printing the letter "S" on the front page
- a person whom you think has had an interesting career
- today's temperature
- a film you would like to see
- an example of something nutritious to eat
- an ad for something you would like to buy; circle the price
- an ad for a job requiring special skills
- picture of people engaged in a sport
- something interesting happening in your community

For Teachers of Kindergarten to Grade 12

The following activities represent only a sample of the ways that newspapers can be used to augment the school curriculum. The activities are divided into the three categories of "Elementary Level", "Secondary Level" and "Ideas to Share with Parents".

Elementary Level

1. SOUNDS GOOD: Use your newspaper to find the following words: that end in "ies", a word with a long "e" sound, a contraction, a compound word, a word that has seven letters, two words that rhyme. Cut and glue them onto a sheet of paper.
2. FIVE IN A LINE: Use today's newspaper and find a number greater than 10. Now find four more numbers that come after. Glue them in order on a sheet of paper.
3. BE A SPORT: Sports writers often use colorful words in their stories to describe sports action. Use your newspaper's sports section to find: two words for win; two words for hit; two words for lose.
4. CENSOR: Read an article from the newspaper that interests you. Now black out several important words from each paragraph. Glue the article to a sheet of paper and sharpen your writing skills by rewriting the article replacing the missing words with what makes sense. You may want to trade your article with a friend.

5. COMIC CUT-UPS: Work with another student and cut apart the comics. Be sure to leave the titles on each one. Now have a race to see who is faster at alphabetizing the comics by title.
6. WORD SLEUTH: Using today's newspaper, find, cut and paste to a sheet of paper: A word with a suffix—underline the root word; two words beginning with the consonant "t"; two words with a short "a" sound; three words that are plurals.
7. COMIC CENTS: Ask your best friend to make a code by giving a money value to each letter of the alphabet. Turn to today's comics and choose the titles of five favorites. Use the code to find the value of each strip's title.
8. ROOTS: Choose an interesting article in your newspaper and, as you read the news, circle every word ending in "ing". Write the words you find on a sheet of paper. Now write the root word beside each.
9. ALPHABET EXPLORER: Use the front page of your newspaper and with a friend, find the names of at least five countries. Cut and arrange these countries in alphabetical order in a column and glue them in place on a sheet of paper. Can you find these countries in your atlas? Write one sentence about each country.
10. OPPOSITES ATTRACT: Use today's newspaper to find and cut out as many antonyms as you can find. Glue them opposite each other on a sheet of paper. Can you find 10 sets in 10 minutes?
11. SYLLABLES: Examine the newspaper with your students for multi-syllabic words which the children can then divide into syllables.
12. A FAVORITE BOOK: After examining the components of a news story have the children write a news story about a favorite book.
13. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Read letters aloud to your students from the editorial page. Discuss different individuals viewpoints on topics. As a class, direct students in selecting a topic, and writing to the editor.
14. HEADLINES: Allow students to write a headline for their favorite television program.
15. CLASSIFIEDS: Examine the classified section of the newspaper and have students write a short ad for an item they wish to sell.

16. THE NEWS: Examine the front page of the newspaper and identify different types of news articles such as local, provincial, national and international.
17. SHAPES: Locate different geometric shapes in the newspaper.
18. MAP SKILLS: Using a map of the province have your students mark all the towns from the province featured in a story in the newspaper.
19. ECONOMICS: Discuss and define inflation. Find related articles to discuss.
20. EMOTIONS: Select pictures from the newspaper which show various emotions. Discuss the ways people handle their emotions.
21. DRAMA: Take the comics. Ideas for drama can be adapted from them.
22. MUSIC: Listen to a favorite record and write about it. This is called a review.
23. CONDOS: Find the condominiums advertised for sale in the paper. If you do not know what a condominium is, look it up in the dictionary. Compare the costs of condominiums in different areas. Draw a chart of the average price of condominiums in different areas.
24. BARGAIN HUNTER: Find a full page grocery ad in the paper. List the three least expensive items and their prices. Compare with your neighbor. Who found the cheapest?
25. BATTER UP: For one week, keep a running account of the batting average of your two favorite Blue Jay players. Chart their progress on a graph.
26. FOR RENT: What percentage of the apartments for rent in the classified ads mention that their apartment has a swimming pool? How many of the ads say "no pets"? What is the average monthly rent of a two-bedroom apartment?
27. WHAT IS IT: Find five ads for cloths made of different materials. Classify them as either synthetic fibres, natural fibres, or skins. What are the clothes you are wearing today made of?
28. WEATHER WATCH: From the weather map, find the area of Canada which has the worst weather forecast. What causes it? Write one paragraph describing the worst weather you have ever been in.

29. POLLUTION: Find a newspaper article which deals with some kind of pollution. What type of pollution is it about? What are the causes of pollution?
30. IMPLICATIONS: Find at least five examples of connotative words. Record the words, telling whether they were found in news stories, editorials or columns. Choose a news story and write a column based on it—using examples of connotative words.
31. DESCRIPTORS: Look for five unusual descriptive words. List them. Write your own sentence for each word. BE DESCRIPTIVE.
32. HELP WANTED: With the help of a friend, answer two help wanted ads in the newspaper. Have your friend be the employer and you the person applying for the job. Write an account of what happened at the interview.
33. DETECTIVE: Find five typographical errors in the newspaper. Write the correct spelling of the words.
34. FOOTBALL FANS: From the football standings, find out how many total points your favorite team has scored this season. Also, find out how many points have been scored by its opponents. What is the average number of points per game scored for and against your team?
35. DOWN TO BUSINESS: On the financial page, find a company which you have heard of. Find out how much that company's stock is selling for. How many shares could you buy with $7000.00.
36. CLASS ACTIVITY: Have everyone in the class select a stock to follow for a week. Allow each student to follow the progress of his/her stock and draw a line graph depicting its fluctuation.

Secondary Level

1. SENTENCES: Have students identify examples of declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative sentences.
2. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Have students find examples of figurative language as it is used in the newspaper (simile, hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoches, etc.).
3. EUPHEMISM: Locate examples of euphemisms in the newspapers.
4. METAPHORS: Locate examples of metaphors and mixed metaphors from the newspaper. Students can substitute metaphors where they are not used in news and feature stories.
5. ACRONYMS: More and more we see the use of acronyms in government, business, etc. Have students read the front page of the newspaper and identify as many acronyms as possible.
6. OBJECTIVITY IN THE NEWS: Have students circle all value words in an article. Try to replace these words with more objective terms if possible. Follow up by having students take a straight news report and add value words to slant the article. Read aloud to the class and discuss benefits of objectivity in the news.
7. EDITORIAL CARTOONS: Clip a number of editorial cartoons and categorize them according to local issues, national issues and international issues.
8. FREE PRESS: By using the newspaper, compare and contrast this country with one that does not have a free press, regarding citizen participation in government, kind of government is country has and citizen rights.
9. HEADLINE HISTORY: Have students rewrite history in present day headlines.
10. WORLD LEADERS: Locate stories about the leaders of different countries. Have the students tell where these countries are and what type of government they have.
11. SATIRE: Have students study satire and find examples in the comic strips.

Ideas for Literacy

12. PUNCTUATION: Using the overhead projector, eliminate all punctuation from an article and have students insert the correct punctuation.
13. LANGUAGE STYLES: Scan news or feature articles for expressive words and picturesque language.
14. 5 Ws and H: Have students identify the 5 W's and H of different news stories. This can lead to introducing a simple summary.
15. PARTS OF SPEECH: Identify different parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, etc.) through the use of the newspaper.
16. NEWS COVERAGE: For one week keep a log of news coverage (all media outlets). Rate the nuclear arms news coverage: biased/unbiased; straight-forward/exaggeration; informative/obscure.
17. VALUES: Are there any values demonstrated in the newspaper that you can relate in any way to mankind living with nuclear arms: Do a values assessment. Look through newspapers as a whole, especially advertisements and feature articles and identify some Canadian values. Prepare a list of values (examples: immediate gratification, consumerism, violence, etc.)
18. UNEMPLOYMENT: A number of Canadians are without jobs. Creating jobs for Canadians is one of the priorities for govenments. Scan the newspaper over several days and select articles dealing with the problem of unemployment and the creation of jobs. In your own words, highlight major points brought out in the articles.
19. STRIKES: Find newspaper articles dealing with a labor strike. Who is on strike? Why? What is your view on this strike and strikes in general?
20. OCCUPATIONS: Examine all the positions listed in the employment section of the newspaper. Categorize all the occupations you've identified; eg. executive, management, skilled labor, unskilled labor, professional, etc. Where are the greatest number located? What does this imply?
21. THESIS STATEMENT: Read three essays on the editorial pages. Highlight the thesis statement in each and circle the key words. Discuss how the key words are amplified in the essay. Write your own essay, using a thesis statement and key words to support your essay.
22. YOU DO IT: let students write a "how-to" article on some topic of interest. Find examples from the newspaper to use as a model. Have them keep in mind the importance of sequence.
23. BE A CRITIC: Read reviews of movies, television shows and books. Have students describe in a help wanted ad the qualifications necessary to be a critic. Try writing a brief review of a program.
24. REPORTING: Pretend you are a news reporter assigned to cover a story being told in a comic strip. Write a headline and short news story of what happened in the comic strip. Make sure to consider who, what, where, when, why, and how.
25. GRAPHS TO PROSE: Have students translate information found in newspaper graphs and tables to prose.
26. HEROES: Have students select one or more heroic figures from literature. They should compare their selections to heroes of today. In a brief feature story they determine the similarities and differences, criteria used for selection, qualities possessed by the heroes etc.
27. INVERTED PYRAMID: Using a selection from literature, list the action of the story as it is initially told. Have students rearrange these facts into the inverted style of newspaper uses.
28. ELEMENTS OF LITERATURE: Select a news article and identify the basic elements of literature (characters, theme, plot, setting).

29. NEWS REPORT: Have students present oral news reports. After listening, students should identify the 5 W's and H.
30. NEWS CONFERENCE: Conduct a mock press conference with someone in the news. Have students develop questions to ask the individual.
31. ROLE-PLAY: Students can role play different situations from the newspaper such as a job interview from the classifieds or an athlete from the sports section. Try dramatizing a comic strip in the form of a short play.
32. MATH: Have students select a news article and explain how the knowledge of mathematics makes it easier to understand the story.
33. NUMBERS: Have students find as many examples of numbers used in different ways as they can. For example, numbers represent counts, order, size, scale, descriptions, measure, etc.
34. CAR PAYMENTS: Choose a new car advertised in the newspaper. How much is the down payment? Calculate the balance due and monthly payments using current interest rates.
35. WORKING WITH DATA: Have students make interpolations from information contained in tables, charts or graphs. For example, between which two decades was there the greatest decline in unemployment?
36. SURVEYS: Conduct an opinion survey and tabulate the results. Report these results in the form a news story.
37. HEALTH: The newspaper constantly informs the public about new developments in health, medicine and science. Have students discuss some of these and write a brief editiorial expressing their own views.

Ideas to Share with Parents

Many skills are learned in school and these skills can be reinforced even more if opportunities are provided for practicing them at home.

The purpose of these activities is to offer some suggestions so that a student can enjoy the interest and encouragement their family can provide.

These ideas are listed in a K to 12 progression with the exception of the first idea—it can apply to all grades.

1. To develop the reading habit try doing silent reading at home by setting aside a certain time each day as reading time. Gather together in one area and have each family member select a section from the newspaper or any other favorite reading materials. Begin with a 5-minute reading time period. Afterwards family members may want to continue reading or discuss what they've read. As your family grows accustomed to this reading time you may wish to increase it to 10 or 15 minutes. This type of activity not only stresses the importance of reading but it also creates a daily time that a busy family can share together.
2. Cut a comic strip into its parts and have your child put the pictures in the correct sequence.
3. Find pictures in the newspaper of people who look interesting. Help your child find their names for the newspaper and underline them.
4. Cut out the letters of the alphabet from the newspaper and paste them on large pieces of cardboard. Encourage the child to find a newspaper picture of an object that begins with each letter and paste the picture beside the letter.
5. With your child, list items or find pictures in the newspaper advertisements which might be dangerous and discuss why the items might be harmful.

Ideas for Literacy

6. Have a word contest. How many words can be made from one in a headline? Find the longest word in a headline. What does it mean? How many words can be made using a word from a classified ad?
7. Find an advertisement in the newspaper that has a coupon to fill out. Have your child fill it in with his name and address for practice.
8. Have your child find a grocery store advertisement. Ask him to mark with a red crayon each item in the ad that costs less than one dollar. If any item costs more, he could color it blue.
9. Have your child examine the television schedule in the newspaper to locate his favorite programs. Then draw clock faces for each program telling the time the show begins.
10. Ask your child to locate, write down and explain to you ten abbreviations found in the classified ads.
11. Ask your child to find and cut out at least four newspaper examples of two-syllable words and four examples of three-syllable words. Then have him mark the correct syllable divisions for each word. Help your child use the dictionary to check his syllable divisions.
12. Ask your child to find and write down examples of as many contractions as he can find from one page of the newspaper. Then try writing the uncontracted form of the words by using them in sentences.
13. Remind your child that a proper noun is the name of specific person, place or thing. It usually appears with the first letter capitalized. Choose one page of the newspaper and ask the child to circle as many proper nouns as can be found on the page.
14. Look through the newspaper with your child to find examples of words that are prounounced the same but that have different meanings and spellings. These are called homonyms, such as by - buy, here - hear and break - brake. Once a few examples have been found, have your child continue the search and cut out examples of these word pairs.

15. Give your child a list of commonly used prefixes, such as: un, dis, re, and suffixes such as: ly, ful, er. Ask him to look through the newspaper headlines and ads and cut out root words to which one of the prefixes or suffixes might be added. Then have the child write one sentence for each word with the prefix or suffix added.
16. Have your child use the classified ads and find unfamiliar careers. What skills and preparation are required for these jobs?
17. Plan a weekend of activities. Use the newspaper to find TV schedules, movies, weather forecasts, games, plays, concerts, and what's happening at the library. Discuss the possibilities, and write a schedule for the weekend.
18. Discuss what information goes into a good ad. Select an item to sell such as a bicycle, skateboard, mini-bike or pet. Write an ad selling that item.
19. Together skim through the "Help Wanted" section of the classifieds and find a job your child might like to have. Have your child write a letter to the employer. Include why he wants the job and the assets or qualities they have that makes them "right" for this job.
20. Select a job that interests your child. Role play the interview. Discuss dress and what a person should say about themselves. What questions might an employer ask?
21. Look through the used car section and find a car that your child would like to have. How many models are listed? Compare prices, year, accessories. Which is the best buy?
22. Skim the classifieds for ten unknown abbreviations. Find out what they mean.
23. Have a family competition to see who can give the most answers to the crossword puzzle.
24. Search for examples of puns.
25. Together discuss current news events that could be extensions of historical problems (ie. Middle East).
26. Look at editorial cartoons. Interpret the message.
27. Study the business section of the newspaper. Look at farm prices, inflation, wage settlements. What impacts the economy?
28. As a family discuss some of the scientific predictions that are made. How will our lives be changed?

English as a Second Language

Nothing quite equals the newspaper as a text for ESL. It deals with a great variety of every day situations, things and people. It is up to date and therefore, intrinsically interesting. It focuses on matters of local concern, things that directly affect the students' life.

1. Find words that begin with "b" as in baby (or any other letter being learned).
2. Look in the newspaper and find names of five places in Canada (or Saskatchewan) you have never heard of. Find these unknown places on a map.
3. Prepare a news quiz about a news story you have chosen. Think of five good questions. Give them to your neighbor to answer.
4. Find a newspaper story and circle every word you know. How many did you find? Read these words aloud to a fellow student.
5. Cut out several newspaper headlines. Cut the headlines into individual words. Have students reassemble the headlines in the correct order.
6. Play this game. Give students time to look through the newspaper. The game then begins with the first student saying, "In the newspaper I found 'A'—ad". The next student repeats the phrase and ads, "In the newspaper I found 'B'—bulletin." The next student ads 'C' and so on. The game may be adapted to focus on one letter of the alphabet only or on certain language concepts, ie. words in the past tense, or vocabulary.
7. Identify terms in the newspaper such as 99¢, $1.49 and practise saying them and writing them out in words. Practise on blank cheques or receipts as reinforcement.
8. What types of things are advertised? How are they made appealing? Arrange the class in groups and have them make up ads.
9. Teach the class to interpret the weather map. Discuss weather prediction.
10. Examine the real estate pages. Prepare an ad for: a house; an apartment; a store or office.
11. Look at the want ads. Have the class prepare a budget for furnishing a room with: $200; $500.
12. Locate a full page food ad. Have your students make a shopping list of food needs for a week. Then estimate the costs of this food bill. Visit a local supermarket and note the actual prices. How much could be saved using coupons?
13. Look through the ad pages and make a list of words that relate to each of the senses—taste, touch, smell, sight and hearing.
14. Read aloud a story of interest from the newspaper. Have students make a picture of the event.
15. Cut out comic sequences and paste them on to separate cards. Have students re-arrange them in correct sequence.
16. Discuss letters to the editor. What sorts of things are people concerned about?
17. Study a recipe and ask the class to work out amounts of each ingredient for a larger or smaller number of people than suggested in the original recipe.
18. Have the class choose a job from the ad section. Then find out all you can about that job. Write a sentence/paragraph about this job.
19. Discuss the television section. Which programs do students watch? For how long?
20. Have the class skim a page from the newspaper, then test them for comprehension. Vary the amounts of time allowed for this.
21. Compare housing costs in different parts of Saskatchewan using the home ads in the newspaper.

22. Find an article of national interest on each of the following: a person, a place, an event, a discovery.
23. Choose a front page article and ask about it: who? when? where? what? why? how?
24. Look for five new words in the newspaper.
25. Read an article from the sports section. Pick out the action verbs.
26. Pretend you have lost a domestic pet. Write a 'lost' ad for insertion into the classifieds.
27. Make a list of the abbreviations used in a newspaper and find out what they mean.
28. Choose a comic strip. Cut out the word bubbles and have the class insert new ones.
29. Have students design their own comic strips.
30. List the good news and the bad news in a given day's newspaper. Why do we call some news "good" and other news "bad"?
31. To help students study phonetics have them find pictures in a newspaper that begin with or end with a certain sound.
32. Discuss some current problems and have students debate the issue and seek solutions. Then have the class collectively send a letter to the editor.
33. Arrange a picture gallery of prominent people mentioned in the news. Give periodic quizes to check the students' recognition of such people. Keep a list of prominent local names.

34. Compare the same news as observed on television, heard on radio and read in the newspaper.
35. Only through the newspaper can the latest political boundary changes in the world be learned. Also, the newspaper tries to cover every significant event everywhere in the world over the last 24 hours.
36. Introduce synonyms by copying a comic strip sentence on the chalkboard. Erase every fifth word and ask students to suggest words which would make sense. Do the words they suggested mean exactly the same as the original words?
37. Ask students to describe any comic strip character they choose. Descriptions should be based on the comic strip and may include information about the character's house, family, profession, etc.
38. Make a list of questions based on the day's comics and use it in a drill to see how well pupils can read for specific information.
39. Using a newspaper, a telephone directory or various application forms try to identify words and interpret the meanings of abbreviations and words.
40. Using an advertisement calculate the sales tax on the various items listed.
41. Plan an evening out. Consider the possibilities of film, sports, etc. by looking through the various events or entertainment pages of the newspaper. Discuss time, where is the event? how to get there?
42. Examine the job advertisements. Have more advanced students write letters of application.

Adult Education

A newspaper can be overwhelming and even threatening to some students. Therefore, it is advisable to introduce students to newspapers slowly and carefully. Make sure that they understand the purpose of a newspaper, and of its different sections and components. This may be done over a period of several lessons.

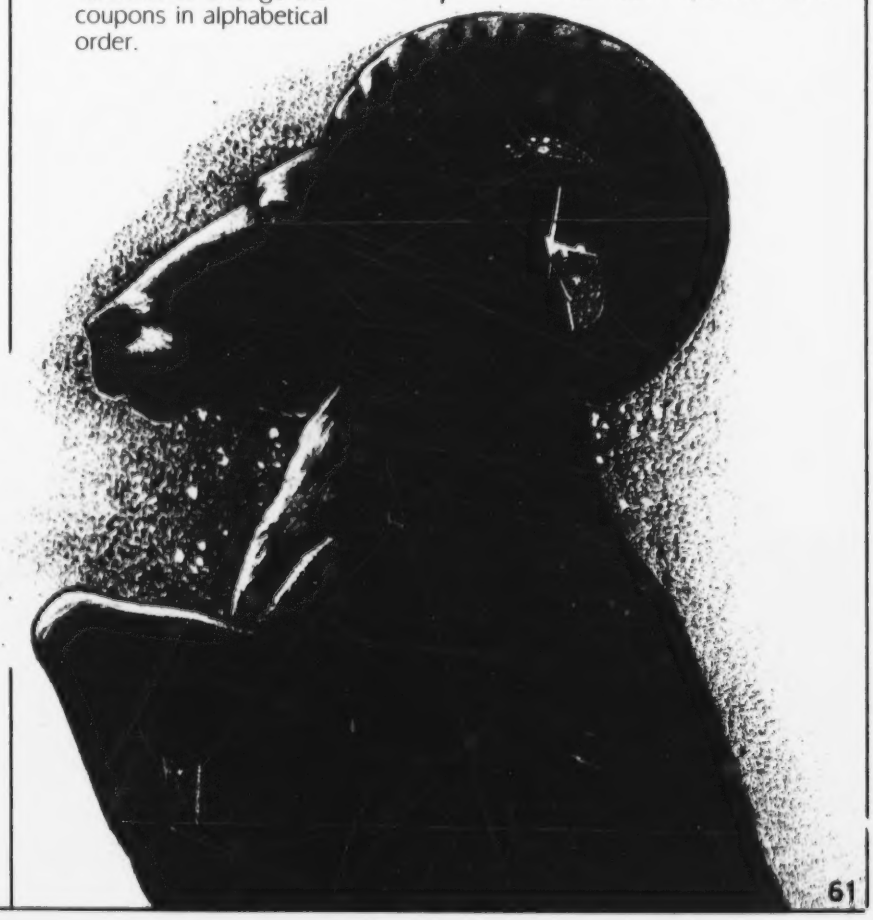
For students who are just beginning to read, it may be necessary to do some exercises in letter recognition. Newspaper computers are capable of producing nearly 100 different styles for each letter of the alphabet. These include upper case, lower case, different heights, thickness, italicized, gothic, stylized, etc. It may be helpful to have students identify various letters of the alphabet as they appear in different styles of print.

Activities for the Beginning Reader

1. Make a newspaper portrait of yourself. Use today's newspaper to find the following items that tell about you. (Use both pictures and words). The name of a car you would like to drive. A word that describes you. A person to whom you would like to write a letter. A food you like. Something you would like to buy. Your horoscope for today. A sports

team you like. A job you might like to do.

2. Advertisers often use words to convince consumers to buy their products. Read the newspaper ads to find some of these words. Make a display of "words that sell"
3. Choose a news photo you like. Make a list of things you could see, hear, smell, taste or touch if you were there.
4. To practice printing skills, turn the pagaes containing the classifieds ads horizontally. The lines are long and well spaced. It's much less insulting than using primary grades' paper.
5. Use open ended sentences and find a word in the paper to complete them. (ie. I think of . . .).
6. Choose a comic strip character. Think of good words to describe him/her and write them down. Read your list aloud and have someone else guess who your character is.
7. Look at the index in the newspaper to find what sections of the newspaper carry information about cars for sale, television, movies, comics, obituaries, sports scores?
8. Look at the newspaper and circle new words. Copy them on a sheet of paper. See if you can guess their meanings by looking at the rest of the sentence or headline. Try looking up these new words in the dictionary. Alphabetize these words.
9. Find your horoscope in the paper. Are there any words that are hard to read or spell? Write the words in your book. Look up these words in the dictionary and copy the meanings. Try to learn both the spelling and the meaning of the words to add to your vocabulary.
10. Have students contribute words or sentences for a group story.
11. Write out the bubbles in a selected comic strip. Have students discuss what the comic strip characters seem to be doing and create new dialogue. Write their dialogues in the appropriate bubbles. Point to the words and read it through with the students.
12. Cut a comic strip into individual panels and scramble them. Have students reassemble the strip in correct order. Try this type of activity using headlines.
13. Look through the Wednesday food section; cut out all the coupons you find. Scramble the coupons. Instruct the students to arrange the coupons in alphabetical order.
14. Have students examine the first two pages of their newspaper. Can they locate today's date? How many days of the week can they find?
15. Have students scan the placelines of stories from the front page. How many can they find that start with letters A or B? More experienced readers can be directed to list all of the placelines on the front page and to alphabetize their lists or classify them according to whether they are Canadian or international.
16. Newspapers provide wonderful examples of language in action. The classified ads in particular are



excellent places to study suffixes. Instruct students to look in the help wanted section and list in three columns: Base word, suffix, job available.

17. Instruct students to scan selected pages of the newspaper. How many words can they find that look the same, or sound the same, but have different meanings? (ie. sea, see).
18. Look in the entertainment section and choose a movie you'd like to see—at what time does it start?
19. Look in the sports page. What baseball (football, hockey) team had the highest score?

More Advanced Literacy Development

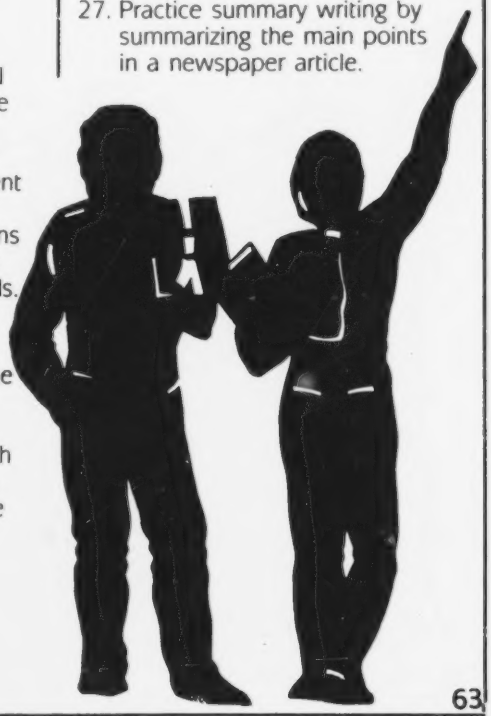
1. Clip five stories that your students can read from the newspaper; remove the headlines from the stories. Have students match the headlines with the stories.
2. Have students read a story about a problem in their city. What caused the problem? Have them list the causes. Then have them write a paragraph describing the solutions.
3. Newspaper headlines are not always complete sentences. Choose 10 headlines from today's newspaper and write them down. Beside each, rewrite the headline as a complete sentence.
4. Look at the ads in the newsapaper for a new TV set. Note the cost. Look in the classified ads for a used TV set. What does it cost?

What are the advantages of buying a used one?

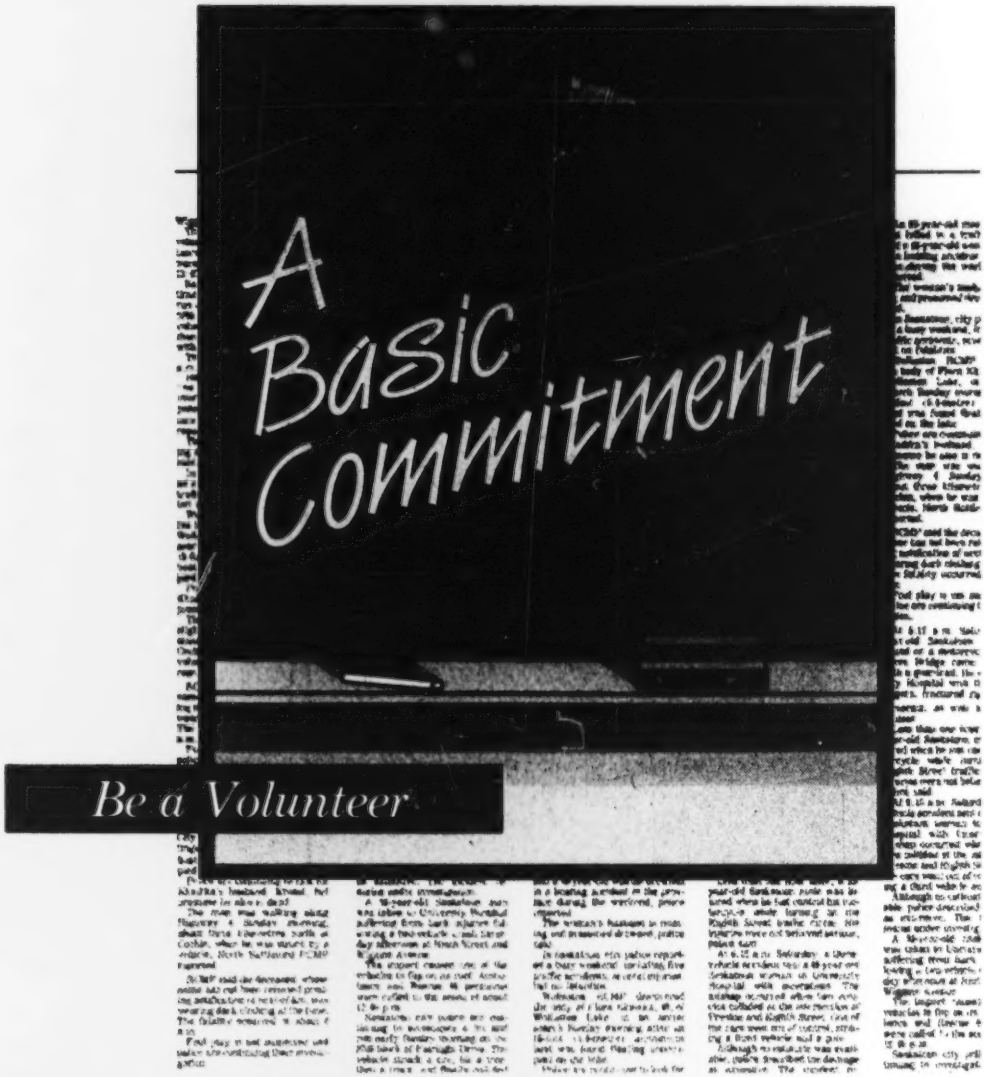
5. Using Wednesday's paper, ask students to select a recipe that appeals to them. What ingredients will they need? Some students may be encouraged to actually prepare the recipes—the ability to follow written directions is the mark of an effective reader.
6. Instruct students to check the display and classified ads, and to locate similar models of cars, ie. Toyota Corolla, etc. Have them calculate the difference in price between the new and the used cars.
7. Check the want ads for something you would like that you might be able to buy used. Examples could include furniture, appliances, a car or a truck. Cut out more than one ad for the item. From the ads you've chosen decide which purchase is best for you. Write a story of your own telling why you make that decision. What headline could you use for your story?
8. Cut out interesting newspaper pictures and remove captions. Ask the students to describe what is happening in the picture or to react to it. Write down what he says . . . go over what you've written down . . . help him to identify his own words in print.
9. Do your students keep up with the news? If so, they are probably getting it on TV or radio. Instruct them to listen to a newscast on TV or radio and to choose one news story to tell the other students or yourself about next class. As the student speaks, jot down the key words on a black board or a transparency. Help him locate these in the story's headline in the newspaper. If appropriate, read part or all of the story with him. Explain the inverted pyramid concept . . . it is possible to get the essential information without reading the whole story.
10. Choose a feature or human interest story. Rewrite, changing every adjective in the story to a synonym of the adjective originally used. When you finish, decide whether or not the words change the feeling of the story in any way.
11. Discuss what television programs your students

enjoy. Make a transparency of theTV listings in the newspaper. Help them to locate the programs they've mentioned and then teach them to identify channel and time as well. Have them find the programs in their newsapaper. When they become adept, have them plot their TV entertainment for a week . . . program, channel and time.

12. Are any of your students homemakers? If so encourage them to tell you some of their grocery needs. Write these items down. Go over the list and help the students read it. Turn to the food ads in Wednesday's newspaper. Locate the items they have listed. As the student becomes more skilled, introduce the concepts of prices, coupons and specials, comparison shopping using the ads.
13. A good newspaper headline gives the main idea of a news story: What or who it is about—in very few words. Find three headlines that attract your attention. Identify, what or who the story is about.
14. When you read a news story, pay special attention to the first paragraph (lead). Read a news story that interests you, and in the lead paragraph, find the answers to what and who.
15. Write your own headlines for three of the stories in today's newspaper. Try to state the main idea in the fewest possible words. Work with another student on this activity. Exchange stories, so that you are writing headlines for each other.
16. Read students an article from the newspaper. Tell students to list words they hear that: begin alike, are repeated several times, are unusual or exciting, are funny, friendly, sad, happy or angry.
17. Read students the first three paragraphs of a news story. Tell them to listen for answers to the questions that answer the 5 W's and H.
18. Have students select an ad from the classifieds. Have them read their ads aloud and tell why they think people placed those ads.
19. Using the newspaper, make up a grocery list of 20 items costing a total of ten dollars.
20. Duplicate a simple news story that your students can read. Block out 5 words—list them on the blackboard. Have students match the words with the blanks correctly.
21. Locate an article in the newspaper that is written about a disease or virus that is invading your area or country. How can this disease or virus be prevented. Write a fictional news story about this disease.
22. Identify sources of information in daily newspapers which may lead to employment: Examine the newspaper and list various diverse sources of job information; read employment ads in the paper—list any terms, words or abbreviations you don't understand; write your own "jobs wanted" ads.
23. Define occupational categories in terms of education and job experience required, and to know minimum requirements of given occupations. Work with another student listing each job and salary offered. Make a chart—categorize each occupation in your list (professional, managerial, clerical etc.); the job requirements (education, experience etc.), salaries, benefits. Examine your chart and then rearrange the list of occupations in order of their appeal to you. Underline jobs you are presently qualified for.
24. Prepare for job applications and interviews by using the employment ads from the newspaper to identify and list initial steps toward employment called for by the ads (eg. letter, telephone etc.). Role play a telephone call or job interview. Write a letter to a prospective employer requesting an interview. Write a resume. Complete sample application forms.
25. Practice oral reading by using articles that are of interest to the students.
26. Write a summary of a movie you have seen. Check the movie listings to decide which one to see. Read a reviewers opinion of the movie. Agree or disagree?
27. Practice summary writing by summarizing the main points in a newspaper article.



Helping someone learn to read ... It's as easy as A B C.



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